

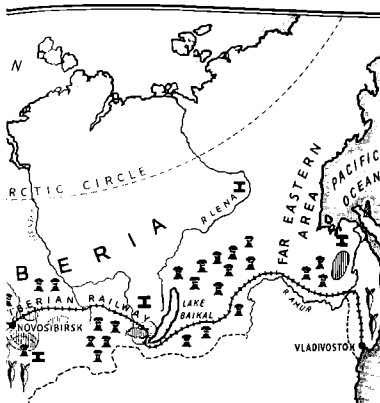
**U · S · S · R**

**HER LIFE AND HER PEOPLE**

**MAURICE DOBB**

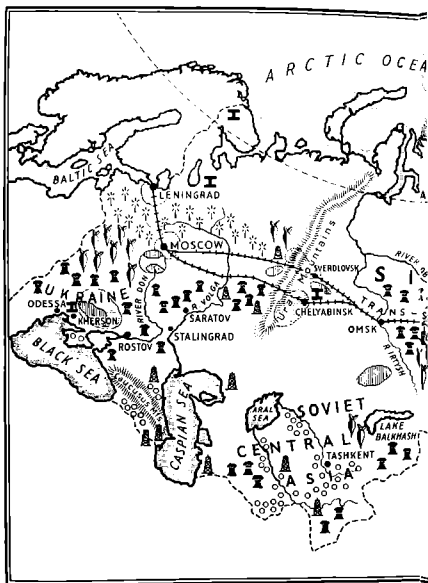
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# AGRICULTURE & MINERAL RESOURCES OF THE U · S · S · R

Wheat and Rye	•••••	Coal	•••••
Sugar Beet	•••••	Iron Ore	•••••
Flax	•••••	Oil	•••••
Cotton	•••••	Industrial Areas	•••••



# U.S.S.R.

HER LIFE AND HER PEOPLE

by

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Cambridge. Author of *Russian Economic  
Development since the Revolution*, *Soviet Eco-  
nomy and the War*, and *Soviet Planning and  
Labour in Peace and War*.

S. K. Acharyya

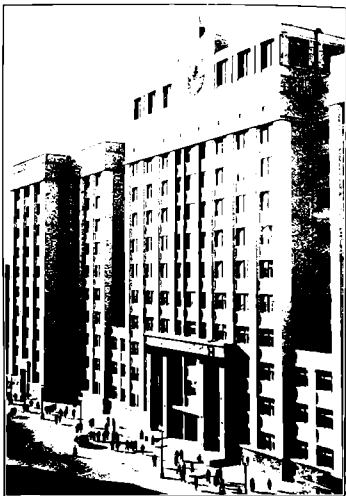
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THE HEADQUARTERS OF THE COUNCIL OF PEOPLE'S COMMISSARS  
OF THE U.S.S.R. IN MOSCOW.

## PREFACE.

THIS book has been written with a special purpose and a special audience in view. It had its origin in the suggestions of certain educationists that there was a pressing need for an up-to-date introductory survey of the U.S.S.R. to assist teachers in spreading a fuller knowledge of the country that is now our ally than has been usual hitherto. Hence it was as a somewhat hurried answer to an apparently insistent demand of the present situation that this book was written, with the intention, first of providing merely an introduction to fuller studies, secondly of addressing primarily children and young persons. One may hope that, if any of maturer years and knowledge should chance to read it, they will bear this consideration in mind in counting the author's omissions. If the book succeeds only a little in extending sympathy and understanding between the young people of this country and of the U.S.S.R. it will have made some contribution to the cause of the United Nations in war, and to the building afterwards of an enduring peace.

M. H. D.

CAMBRIDGE,  
*June 1945.*

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MANY people, when they speak of Russia, think only of that part of the country which lies in Europe; and they forget that the Russians are only one of the many peoples, and Russia to-day only one of the sixteen republics, which make up what is now known (since 1923) as the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

To give some idea of the vast area covered by this country, it is often spoken of as covering one-sixth of the land-surface of the globe. Perhaps a better impression of its size can be given if one says that, both in length and breadth, it stretches farther than U.S.A., and that its total area is more than double that of U.S.A. From east to west it is about twice as wide as Europe from the coast of Portugal to Turkey, and half as wide again as the whole of Europe from Portugal to the Ural Mountains. From north to south it is over 2,000 miles, and from east to west some 5,000 or 6,000. Its Far Eastern area is twice as far from western Russia as London is from New York, and the Trans-Siberian Railway, which links the west with Vladivostok on the Pacific coast opposite Japan, is 6,000 miles long, or as far as London is from Cape Town.

Almost four-fifths of the whole area of the U.S.S.R. lies in Asia, and scarcely more than one-fifth of it in Europe; so that it strides two continents. On the extreme west its 1941 frontier roughly touched a line extending from north-east Sweden or Norway down to Greece. At the other end its extreme eastern tip almost touches the north-western tip of the great American continent, being separated from Alaska by a stretch of water not much wider than the English Channel between Dover and Calais—the thirty-six

# CONTENTS

	PAGE
PREFACE	5
CHAPTER	
1. INTRODUCTORY	7
2. RUSSIA BEFORE 1914	13
3. THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION BEGINS	20
4. LENIN AND THE SOVIETS TAKE POWER	25
5. AFTER 1917	30
6. THE ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY OF THE U.S.S.R.	44
7. THE ECONOMIC SYSTEM	61
8. THE PLAN AND HOW IT WORKS	72
9. THE POLITICAL SYSTEM	82
10. EDUCATION	93
11. THE THEATRE, CINEMA, MUSIC AND BOOKS	103
12. THE U.S.S.R. AND OTHER COUNTRIES	113
13. THE ARMED FORCES	121
14. THE WAR AND THE ANGLO-SOVIET ALLIANCE	129
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	137
INDEX	138

than are most countries: while you could put the British Isles nearly sixty times into the U.S.S.R., the latter has only four times as many people. But the people who compose this 193 million have as many differences of race, language and custom as do the various peoples who compose the British Empire.

The inhabitants of the European part, who are the more numerous (making up three-quarters of the whole), sprang originally from two main groups of peoples. First there was the Finnish-Ungrian group, inhabiting the forests and marshes of central and north-eastern Russia. Second, there was the Slav language-group, which at first dwelt on the Lower Danube and later between the rivers Dnieper and Vistula, in the neighbourhood of the Carpathian mountains. These Slavs divided into several groups, some being driven northwards, probably by the pressure of the invading Avars and Huns; but some of them moving eastwards into the valley of the Dnieper. In the course of centuries the Finnish-Ungrian peoples were pushed northwards into what is now Finland and Karelia (a group of them still remains in a district of the Volga—the Mordvins); and the Slavs extended north-east towards the Upper Volga and northwards to the river Neva. In the thirteenth century the Tartars invaded from the east and have left behind them to this day "islands" of Tartar populations, in the Crimea and on the Volga (round the ancient city of Kazan). They were related to other branches of what is sometimes known as the Turkic-Tartar group: people who are found to-day in Central Asia and in north-east Siberia.

To-day the Russians proper make up approximately a half of the total population of U.S.S.R. Next to them in importance come Ukrainians, who make up a fifth; and after them the White Russians. But besides these there are some 180 different tongues. The Caucasus region alone is a mosaic of different peoples: war-like mountain peoples like the Mohammedan Lezgians of Daghestan, who of old lived by looting lowland villages; Ossetes,

miles of the Behring Straits. Its northern edge from Murmansk right along to beyond Wrangel Island lies within the Arctic Circle and comes to within 620 miles of the North Pole. Stretching from longitude 32° E. to beyond 180° E., this northern coast reaches nearly half-way round the top of the world. Here in the far north the sea is an expanse of ice through which ice-breakers have to battle even in summer. In winter months it is continuous night, and polar bears inhabit its silent spaces. Two thousand miles away, its southernmost borders touch Persia and Afghanistan and India. Here are deserts crossed by camels and jungles where tigers roam.

Travelling across this country that strides two continents, one meets almost every variety of scenery. In the north-west deep echoing forests of fir and pine. Farther south the flat steppe extends on every side as far as the eye can see. In the extreme south rise the snow-capped peaks of the Caucasus, more remote and inaccessible than the Alps or the Pyrenees. Eastward across the Caspian there are sun-parched expanses where the air shimmers in the intense heat and in the green patches where water is to be found nomad peoples pitch their tents, like Arabs, and pasture their roaming herds. Farther east still are the mountain ranges of the Pamirs, the Altai and the Tian Shan, furrowed by deep, rock-bordered passes, fringed by gentle upland pastures and crossed to-day by motor-roads as well as camel-tracks. North-east again we come to the Siberian *taiga*, deep untouched forest areas, the home of wolves and deer and elk; vast lakes like Lake Baikal, and great rivers, like the Yenisei, the Lena, the Indigirka, which flow north into the frozen wastes of the Arctic region.

As varied as its climate and its scenery are its peoples. The population of the U.S.S.R. in June 1941 numbered 193 million—three times the population of pre-Hitler Germany; considerably larger than that of U.S.A.; but only half that of India and less than half that of China. Considering its vast area, it is much less thickly peopled

Ukraine (dynamited in 1941 to thwart the advancing Germans); the giant hydro-electric scheme on the river Volga at Kuibyshev, designed eventually to be the largest in the world.

## Chapter 2

## - RUSSIA BEFORE 1914 - -

AT the time of the war of 1914 the Russian Empire (as it was then called) was a very backward area of the world compared with most other countries of Europe and with North America. Despite great natural riches of her soil and subsoil, much of her mineral wealth lay undeveloped, and even her agriculture was backward because of the primitive nature of most of her farming. Her railways were few, considering the extent of the country; metalled roads of a modern type were almost non-existent outside the suburbs of a few of the larger towns. As a result, the people were exceedingly poor (except for a small upper class)—on the average several times poorer than this country, and for the most part as poor as, or poorer than, the poorest area of Europe. In education and culture all but the few were very backward; and seventy in every hundred of the people could not read or write.

There were some modern industries, including some large and up-to-date factories: cotton factories, ironworks and so forth. Coal and iron were mined in the Ukraine and the Urals. Nearly all of these were in the western, European, part of the country: in the St. Petersburg (now Leningrad) district in the north, round Moscow, in the Donetz region in the south, and farther west still in certain districts of Poland, which at that time formed part of the Russian Empire. In the south, between the Black Sea and the Caspian, they bored for oil: much of it was for export to foreign markets, and much of it in a crude state to be treated

Rich coal seams are found in the basin of the river Don which runs into the Sea of Azov and the Black Sea, in the Urals, in Siberia and in Kazakstan; iron-ore in the Ukraine, the Urals and Siberia; copper and lead and zinc near lake Balkash in Central Asia. In the Caucasus they bore for oil (Baku on the Caspian Sea is the chief centre); also west of the Urals (what they call the "second Baku") and to a smaller extent in Central Asia and the Far East. In oil production the U.S.S.R. before the war was second only to U.S.A. Gold is mined along the river Lena in north-eastern Siberia, U.S.S.R. to-day taking second place in the world as a producer of gold. Bauxite, the raw material of aluminium, so important for aeroplane construction, is found near lake Ladoga and by the river Dnieper and in the Ural mountains. Nickel, so necessary for the steels that make armour-plate, comes from the Kola peninsula in the extreme north-west and from the Urals. In addition to their coal and iron-ore and bauxite and nickel, the Ural mountains are rich in steel-hardening metals like manganese and chrome.

Until ten or fifteen years ago most of these rich resources, especially those in the eastern part of the country, were undeveloped. Minerals were unmined, often even unexplored. As we shall see in a later chapter, the Government of the U.S.S.R. in the years following 1928 carried out a gigantic programme of developing these resources and turning them to the use of man, as basis for vast new industries. One thing that has been especially important in this development is the use of what they call "white coal." The abundance of powerful-flowing rivers has enabled their waters, in recent years, to be harnessed to giant hydro-electric stations, to feed power and light to surrounding towns and industries. For example: the Volkhov river and the Svir river and their power-schemes in the north-west; the lake of Sevan two miles high in the snow-topped mountains of Armenia; the river Chirchik and the river Kadryra in far-off Uzbekistan which supplies power to Tashkent; the half-mile-wide Dnieper-dam in the

throughout the world. The Russian Ballet and the Moscow Arts Theatre and the Hermitage Art Collection at St. Petersburg were famous in all the capitals of Europe. That magnificent main street of St. Petersburg, the capital, called Nevsky Prospect, was flanked on both sides by stately palaces and gardens which were the equal of any of their kind in Europe. But these large centres were few, and the culture they housed was like a thin crust on society. Many provincial towns were little more than overgrown villages; most even of the larger ones lacked a proper water-supply and modern sanitation, as they lacked also any decent library or picture-gallery. Most of the houses, at least outside the immediate centre of the town, were of wooden structure, as in a village; and this was true even of the largest cities. No more than fifteen in every hundred people lived in towns; and four in every five people lived by tilling the soil. As a combined result of poverty and bad sanitation and insufficient medical attention, the death-rate, specially among children, was abnormally high. (The general death-rate was nearly 30 per 1,000, or nearly double what it was in the United Kingdom at that date; and the infant death-rate was between two and three times what it was in this country. Since then the infant death-rate in U.S.S.R. has been halved as a result of better care of children and of mothers.)

The largest section of society was the peasantry or small working-farmers, the mass of them wretchedly poor, working their 10- to 12-acre holdings with the labour of their family. Had it not been for the need to get money with which to pay taxes, most of them would have sent little of their produce to market, but would have consumed it themselves. Among them were a few well-to-do peasants who possessed more land and were better equipped with horses or oxen and ploughs and carts and barns for storage. They were called *kulaks* (the Russian word for *fiist*), because they often drove hard bargains with their poorer neighbours as village money-lenders or traders in a small way. But there were also peasant families even poorer than the average,



HERMITAGE GALLERY, LENINGRAD.

Famous collections of art treasures are housed here. (Photo taken by the author's wife in 1936.)

in foreign refineries. A large part of the capital of this industry was foreign-owned, some German, some French, some British; and many factories had foreign engineers and managers. But most of the country's needs for manufactured goods had to be satisfied by importing from other countries; and to pay for these imports she exported corn and other products of her farms and her mines. Because of the poverty of most of her people, the market at home for the products of her industries was a limited one; and it was often said that it was the extreme poverty of the farmers who grew the corn (their willingness, through want, to sell their corn or else their own labour at a low price), and not the productiveness of their farms, that enabled Russian corn to compete in the markets of the world.

There were large towns like Moscow and St. Petersburg with some fine buildings and modern streets and a social and cultural life to challenge comparison with that of any other European city. Russian music and the work of writers like Tolstoy, Dostoievsky, Chekhov, Gorky were known



A few of the large estates were farmed on fairly up-to-date lines; and it was these large estates, together with the *kulak* farms, that accounted for most of the grain and other produce that came to market, to supply the towns or to be exported abroad. But most of the small peasant farming was of a very primitive kind. Much of the ploughing was done with a primitive type of wooden plough, incapable of ploughing at all deeply. Most of the harvesting was done by hand—hand sickles and hand threshing. Many of the smallholdings of the peasants were in scattered strips, such as we associate with the Middle Ages. Scientific rotation of crops was rare, and knowledge of modern agricultural methods, as well as the ability to make use of them, was generally lacking. Poverty combined with ignorance to set a barrier against progress and improvement.

It has to be remembered that Russia (in the main) failed to undergo those social and political changes which took place in countries of western Europe in the first half of the nineteenth century and even earlier—changes towards greater political freedom which are sometimes summed up under the term "bourgeois-democratic revolution," because the driving-force behind them was the new moneyed *bourgeoisie* (or middle class). Until as late as 1861 the people on the land had still been serfs, tied to the land and to a lord, bought and sold with the land to which they were tied, as used to be the case in England some four or five centuries ago. Even after serfs were freed in 1861, the former serf, now an independent peasant farmer, still remained servile and oppressed in numerous ways. Most of them were perpetually on the verge of starvation because they had too little land to live on. If they rented more, they generally had to pay a most burdensome rent for it; and if they sold their crop before the harvest, out of need for ready money, they often only got half the usual price for it. Peasants were frequently flogged for petty offences, like insubordination or non-payment of taxes. Power rested in the hands of a small landowning nobility, and government was in the hands of the Tsar (who was himself the largest

lacking animals or implements with which to cultivate their meagre holdings, burdened with debt and forced to seek work for others for a wage. Above them was a class of gentry, owning large estates, who, although comparatively few in number, owned about a third of the cultivated land. These estates were farmed through bailiffs and managers, or more often were leased out in small plots to peasants for a rent.

In the towns there was a small but growing class of factory workers (or factory *proletariat*) who worked for wages. These numbered about two or three million. Generally they worked at low wages, and lived in very overcrowded conditions, many of them in fetid cellar dwellings or in sordid barrack-like lodging-houses such as are described in Maxim Gorky's story called *Lower Depths*. Nearly twice their number worked, not in factories and with power-driven machinery, but as handicraft-workers in small workshops or sheds or back rooms in the towns and villages.

In the towns there was also a still smaller, but likewise growing, class of owners of capital who employed this capital in trade or industry. Many of them had started as richer peasants, and from money-lending and petty trade in the village had accumulated enough money to move into the town and launch out in a more ambitious way. The most powerful among them were bankers and company-promoters and factory-kings, who ranked as gentry, occasionally had influence at Court, and sometimes bought landed estates in the country. Below them were the wholesale dealers, grain-brokers and mill-owners and owners of textile factories; ambitious and thrifty, but lacking the social status and influence of those whose riches were less recently accumulated and who had a more established position as a result. In addition, there was the usual middle class of small shopkeepers and professional people—teachers, doctors, lawyers—as well as employees of the central or provincial Government. As for unemployed and beggars, these also abounded.



MOSCOW.

A modern view of the centre of the city, looking across the river towards the Kremlin (formerly palace of the Tsars, now centre of the Soviet Government).

Election to it took place according to social groups or classes (as with the *Zemstva*)—that is, the landowners elected so many, the peasants so many, etc. But after the revolutionary movement had been suppressed, the Tsar altered the basis of the elections (in 1907) so as to give the landed nobility a majority. Moreover, the powers of the *Duma* were limited. Ministers were still appointed by the Tsar; the army, police and administration of justice remained outside the *Duma's* control; and the Tsar could dissolve the *Duma* at his pleasure and could veto any laws proposed by it.

The events of 1905 were not without their effect. There was rather more freedom of speech and writing than before; and in banding together to demand certain democratic rights the people came to have a new sense of their own power; while many among the masses of ordinary people started to think politically for the first time. But, as far as the Government was concerned, little was altered. Newspapers were still liable to suppression for expressing



MAIN STREET OF AN OLD-STYLE VILLAGE IN CENTRAL RUSSIA.  
(Photograph taken by the author in the early spring of 1929. Note the snow melted into mud, the peasant sledge and the small wooden houses.)

landowner in the country) and the ministers appointed by him: an absolute monarch who ruled through ministers and officials, uncontrolled by an elected Parliament. There were, however (since 1865), in each district elected councils called *Zemstva*, which had certain limited powers over local affairs. These were chiefly composed of people of property—landowners or traders or industrialists—although the peasants also had some representation. The elections were according to classes (nobles, townspeople with property and peasants), with both the intention and the result that representatives of the nobility should have most weight.

In 1905 there occurred an unsuccessful revolution against the autocratic government of the Tsar, following widespread suffering and discontent which were aggravated by inefficiency in the conduct of the Russo-Japanese War, in which the Russian forces suffered severe defeat. In face of military defeat and a rising revolutionary temper throughout the country, the Tsar made the concession of establishing a kind of Parliament, called the *Duma*.



THE TSAR (LEFT), AND THE MONK RASPUTIN (RIGHT).

to relieve pressure on the British and French armies in France, by diverting German forces eastward, and so enabled the Germans to be hurled back from before Paris in the great battle of the Marne in August 1914. But by the end of 1916 the strain was beginning to tell. After some initial successes, there had been a series of defeats, leading in the summer of 1915 to the loss of Warsaw and of Lithuania. Soldiers were war-weary and desertions became frequent.

Behind the front there were transport breakdowns and interruption of supplies. By the end of the winter of 1916 there was something approaching economic collapse. The poor of both the towns and the villages were hit by rising prices. Bread was scarce because the peasants were bringing less crops to market. Bread-queues became a common sight in the cities; and in the winter of 1916-17 it was not unusual in the working-class districts of Moscow and St. Petersburg for women to stand in queues through the night in the snow. There was widespread corruption in high places, profiteering by influential contractors at the expense

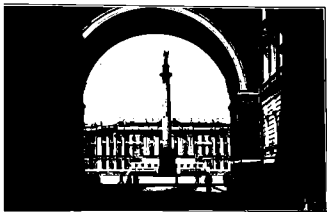
views hostile to the Government; and organisers of opposition meetings were continually subject to interference by the police, to arrest and exile to Siberia. Trade-unions had had a mushroom-growth during 1905, and some of them continued to have an underground existence even after that eventful year. But they were also subject to suppression by the police, their organisers and active members being imprisoned or exiled. The same applied to working-class parties of a labour or socialist type; as well as to parties and organisations which voiced the demands of the peasantry for land-reform.

By land-reform the peasants meant the compulsory dividing-up of the large estates among the peasantry, to satisfy the continual "land-hunger" of those millions of families who had too little land to enable them to eke out a bare subsistence, and who faced famine and ruin in years of bad harvest when crops were thin. This was a burning question for nearly four-fifths of the people—a matter of life and death for many of them; and it was a question where a sharp clash was inevitable between the ruling nobility and the mass of the peasant farmers.

### Chapter 3

#### - THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION BEGINS -

THE war of 1914 placed a very severe strain on Russia. Her soldiers fought bravely, often with inadequate equipment, and with a supply-system behind the lines that was inefficient and eventually broke down over wide areas. During the first months of the war, although it was not yet ready to launch an offensive, the Russian army responded to an urgent call for assistance from the Allies by marching into East Prussia. While this advance resulted in a costly Russian defeat at Tannenberg, it represented an important contribution to the eventual Allied victory. It did much



THE WINTER PALACE IN LENINGRAD (FORMERLY ST. PETERSBURG).

Seen through what is now called the Red Army Arch.

applause greeted the Cossacks from thousands of throats." The same observer tells how, later, when the Cossacks were ordered to keep back the crowds from the bridges over the river, by which the demonstrators were trying to cross into the central part of the city, people started slipping unmolested between the legs of the Cossacks' horses and pressing through to the river, where they started to run across the ice until "the ice on both sides of the bridge was black with people running into one another like ants."

On March 11th the President of the *Duma* telegraphed to the Tsar (who was outside the capital): "The situation is very serious. Government is paralysed. Transport and fuel absolutely disorganised. General dissatisfaction is growing. Riots and firing in the streets. Sections of the same regiments are firing at one another. Necessary to get someone popular in the country to form a government." The next day he wired again: "The situation is worse." Finding himself without troops that he could rely on to suppress the revolutionary movement, the Tsar decided to

of the country's misery, and even intrigue and pro-German influences at Court. For example, a depraved monk called Rasputin worked on the superstitions of the Tsarina (who thought he had miraculous powers) to secure a position of great influence at Court, until a group of aristocrats, fearing his influence, made a conspiracy to poison him and to dispose of his body beneath the ice of the river Neva.

In the first three months of 1917 discontent among the people assumed the form of food-riots, of widespread strikes and of mass demonstrations in the streets. Banners were carried saying "Down with the Tsar" and "Give us Peace and Bread." At one time in January a third of the workers in Moscow were on strike. Influential persons at the head of the *Duma* were planning a kind of palace-revolution to depose the Tsar in order to get rid of inefficiency and pro-German influences. Some of them planned to put the Grand Duke Michael, brother of Tsar Nicholas, in his place.

In February the largest armament works in the capital (the famous Putilov works) went on strike, and street processions and meetings called for the abdication of the Tsar. The strike movement spread and became almost general. Troops called out to disperse demonstrators refused to fire on the crowd, and in some cases mutinied and joined the demonstrators. One observer who was present on the streets at the time tells how, when a detachment of the dreaded Cossacks received an order to charge a procession and disperse it, the Cossacks on their horses simply rode through the middle of the procession as it divided to either side of the street, and did nothing further. "The officer's word of command rang out . . . with hearts contracted and horror-stricken eyes our brains worked feverishly: no hope of defence or of escape. The officers were the first to fling themselves on the crowd. They forced their way through with their horses, their eyes bloodshot; behind them we could see the Cossacks charging along the whole length of the avenue. . . . But what joy! The Cossacks wormed their way through the passage just made by the officers, some smiled and some winked openly at the workers. Shouts of



## Chapter 4

### LENIN AND THE SOVIETS TAKE POWER

IT was at this time that Lenin (who had previously been in exile abroad) returned to Russia. Lenin was born in 1870 in the provincial town of Simbirsk on the river Volga, the son of a physics master in a neighbouring school who was later made a Government education inspector; his mother being the daughter of a country doctor. During his first term at the University of Kazan he was rusticated by order of the police for taking part in a students' political meeting. Six years later (in 1893) he moved to St. Petersburg, the capital, at the university of which he took a degree in law which enabled him to practise as a barrister. But his chief occupation in these years was to help to organise the small secretly meeting socialist groups which existed at the time into a united and disciplined party, which was to become the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party. In particular, he was keen about carrying on agitation and work of political education among the factory workers of the capital. For these activities he was exiled by the Government to Siberia with his wife. From there he escaped a few years later and came to western Europe; for a time living in London, where the newspaper he helped to edit was published. (It was called *Iskra* (the Spark); and, printed abroad, it was smuggled into Russia and secretly distributed under the noses of the Tsar's police.) During the revolution of 1905 he returned to Russia, but had to flee abroad again when the revolution was suppressed. About this time important differences of policy caused Lenin to form his own group within the Social Democratic Labour Party, with a newspaper of its own. This group was known as the Bolsheviks (from the Russian word for "majority," because of a division that appeared in the old Social Democratic Labour Party at its Congress in 1903) and the rival

abdicate; and the leader of the chief opposition parties in the *Duma* declared themselves a Provisional Government, under the premiership of Prince Lvov, in place of the former Tsarist Ministers. In the provinces the former Governors were dismissed and their functions were entrusted to the chairmen of the provincial *Zemstva* (see Chapter 2).

A curious situation now arose. As had happened in 1905, there developed during these revolutionary days bodies called *Soviets* in the various localities. Soviet is simply the Russian word for Council; and to these local Councils came elected representatives from the chief factories and occupations. Similar committees were springing up in the army—soldiers' committees or councils; and in the countryside also village Soviets were being formed. A month after the deposition of the Tsar, the St. Petersburg Soviet invited other places to send delegates from their own Soviets to a Congress of Soviets for the whole country. These bodies quickly became the organising centres of the popular movement which in the first weeks of March had brought about the downfall of the Tsar. Before long some of their representatives took their place as Ministers in the new Provisional Government.

Hence, alongside the Provisional Government which sat in the Winter Palace by the river Neva stood the Soviets, whose headquarters were not far away at the Smolny Institute (which had been a high school for young ladies of the nobility). The latter was a sort of workers' Parliament; only, unlike an ordinary Parliament, it was composed of delegates elected from meetings of factories and organisations and reporting back to them. This is what came to be known as the *Dual Power*: two parallel bodies, the government which legally held the reins of power and the Soviets which exercised an increasing amount of the actual power. This situation could hardly remain as it was indefinitely. In which direction was it going to move?



LENIN AT HIS DESK.

at the naval station of Kronstadt just outside the capital. On the day following the collapse of the Kornilov *coup* the Bolsheviks secured a majority in the Petrograd Soviet, and thereby for the first time controlled its executive committee. A week later the same thing happened in the Moscow Soviet and at Kronstadt. In some other provincial centres, including far-away Tashkent, the Soviets proceeded to take power into their own hands. The Petrograd Soviet, under its new Bolshevik leadership, proceeded to set up a Military Revolutionary Committee to organise an armed seizure of power. Red Guard detachments were drilled and armed; delegates were sent to military regiments to enlist their support; and plans were made for the co-operation of the sailors' committees at Kronstadt. At 2 a.m. on November 7th Red Guard detachments silently occupied key-points in the capital, such as the railway station, the telegraph offices, the bridges over the river Neva and electric-power stations. The Winter Palace, where Kerensky's Government was in session, was surrounded, and the cruiser *Aurora* moved up the river from Kronstadt and trained its

the end of August General Kornilov (who had recently been appointed Commander-in-Chief of the army) assembled troops in preparation for a march on the capital with the intention of setting up a military dictatorship, with himself as Prime Minister. An ultimatum was presented to Kerensky ordering him to transfer power to Kornilov, in return for which Kerensky would be made Vice-President. Soviets and trade-unions organised workers' militia (later known as "Red Guards") to defend the capital; appeals were made to the regiments moving against the capital not to betray the revolution; railwaymen held up trains, and many of the General's own troops refused to obey him. As a result the conspiracy collapsed.

Lenin at this time was in hiding across the border in Finland, living secretly in a peasant's hut in the marshes. His colleagues had persuaded him to flee the capital a few weeks previously, when *Pravda*, the Bolshevik newspaper, had been suppressed and there was danger of Lenin's arrest. But he was keeping in close touch with events and with the activities of his own party. After the Kornilov attempt at a counter-revolution, it became clear to him that either the Soviets must take power into their own hands or else they would be suppressed and a semi-military dictatorship would be set up, with Kornilov at its head or some other "strong man" who had the confidence of the generals and the business men. He maintained that there was no longer any middle way; and that a Soviet Government must take the place of the Provisional Government. At first he proposed that this should be done by the two parties that had the majority in the Soviets (the Mensheviks and Kerensky's party, the Social Revolutionaries). But when these parties opposed the suggestion, Lenin took the view that the change could only come by a forcible overthrow of the existing Government and the setting up of a Soviet Government, organised by the Bolsheviks.

Meanwhile the influence of the Bolsheviks had been growing in the Soviets, to some extent also in the armed forces and especially among the sailors of the Baltic Fleet

it) by leaving the front in their thousands and streaming back home to their village or town. After an unsuccessful attempt to persuade the other allied Governments to join with it in a general peace conference, the new Government began peace negotiations with the Germans at Brest-Litovsk—a Polish town on what was then the German side of the front-line. At the same time leaflets were issued in millions and distributed among German soldiers and workers calling upon them to bring about a change of government inside Germany and set up a government that would agree to a just peace on the basis of "no annexations and no indemnities." But the Germans insisted on annexing to themselves large slices of Russian territory, including Riga and the Baltic provinces; and their armies proceeded to advance farther into Russian territory and threatened the Russian capital. The Russian army at the time was not in a condition to offer effective resistance; although a stout fight was put up against the German forces round Narva and Pskov. On March 3rd the Soviet Government had to bow to superior force and accept the German terms in the Peace of Brest-Litovsk—a peace treaty imposed at the point of German bayonets.

The newly-born Soviet State had gained a few months' "breathing-space" to strengthen its position and to start reconstructing its industry and economic life that were so broken and exhausted by war. But the breathing-space was not to be for long. The new Government had plenty of enemies both inside and outside the country. Inside the country the old Tsarist generals and army officers who wanted a return to the old *régime*, landlords who had been deprived of their estates, bankers and large merchants of Moscow and Petrograd and politicians of the old ruling parties were busy gathering together their forces in outlying parts of the country where the authority of the Soviets was still weak. For example, General Kornilov started organising a Volunteer Army, chiefly composed of Cossacks, in the Caucasus region. These various armies came to be known as the White Armies. They received support from

guns on the Winter Palace. Faced with this situation, Kerensky fled, and that night the Red Guards occupied the Winter Palace and the Provisional Government capitulated. A Soviet Government, headed by Lenin, was set up instead, and declared itself the supreme Government of Russia.

This was the Soviet Revolution of November 1917, which followed so closely on the heels of the overthrow of Tsardom in March of the same year. While the transfer of power was a product of armed force, there was comparatively little fighting in the capital. In Moscow and in one or two provincial centres there was greater bloodshed; but the fighting was over within a few days. Among the first acts of the new Government was a decree nationalising the land, and giving power to special Land Committees of the village Soviets to arrange the division of the landlords' estates among the peasantry. This was accompanied by an appeal to all Governments taking part in the war to conclude a temporary armistice in order to start negotiations for "a just democratic peace" (based on the principle of "no annexations and no indemnities"); and by a decree giving important powers of control over the conduct of their factories to elected factory committees. A few weeks later banks, railways and the largest industrial enterprises were nationalised; but at this stage there was no wholesale nationalisation of businesses belonging to private owners.

## Chapter 5

### - - - - AFTER 1917 - - - -

BY the end of 1917 the economic life of the country had come very near to a state of collapse; and it was clear that peace was an urgent necessity for the country. The ordinary people retained little belief in the aims for which the war was being fought; and for some time soldiers had been "voting for peace with their feet" (as Lenin once put



THE OLD AND THE NEW.

Street scene in Tashkent, capital of Uzbekistan, in Soviet Central Asia.

Red Army occupied the Crimea, the last stronghold of the White forces in the south, now commanded by General Wrangel. This virtually ended the civil war; although fighting still went on against remnants of the White forces and against bandits in Turkestan and on the borders of Mongolia, and the Japanese did not finally leave the Pacific port of Vladivostok until two years later, in August 1922.

The economic life of the country had been further shattered by the years of civil war which followed so close on the heels of the exhausting war of 1914-17. Under the pressure of events in the spring and early summer of 1918, the Soviet Government had turned all factories, even quite small ones, into Government factories; and to organise supplies for the army and for the towns it had used compulsion, where need be, to purchase surplus grain from the peasant-farmers ("compulsory requisitioning"). The first task of the Government, therefore, as soon as the war was over, was to rebuild the shattered economic life of the country—to get the wheels of industry turning again to

foreign Governments outside Russia, who sent them money and supplies, military advisers and even troops to assist them to overthrow the Soviet Government.

Serious fighting broke out in the early summer of 1918. This was the beginning of the Civil War which was to last for more than two years. British troops landed in the north at Archangel, overthrew the local Soviet authorities and set up a White Government. The Governments in Paris and London sent help to General Denikin, who succeeded General Kornilov in command of the White Armies in the south. The German Armies occupied the Ukraine, and gave assistance to another White general called Krassnov. In Siberia there were American and Japanese troops, who supported a White Government under an Admiral called Kolchak.

During this civil war the Soviet Government, with its hastily organised Red Army, had to defend itself on several fronts at the same time. At times it was very hard pressed; as when one White Army approached almost to the gates of Petrograd and when the ancient university town of Kazan on the Volga was captured by the Whites. On another occasion White Armies from the south threatened the munition-making town of Tula, which is only a hundred miles from Moscow. An important turning-point is associated with the name of Stalin, who commanded a gun-boat on the Volga and recaptured Kazan. Later he organised the defence of Tsaritsyn (which was to take his name as the now famous city of Stalingrad). It is related that he sent away all the boats on the river which might have been used as a means of retreat for the Red Army to the far bank of the river, thereby leaving no alternative than to attack the enemy and fight their way through the middle of the White forces opposite them.

One after the other, however, the White Armies were defeated, despite the assistance they were receiving from abroad. Finally, in 1920 a Polish army which had advanced and captured Kiev was driven back, and an armistice was signed with Poland in October; while in November the





THE GREAT DAM ACROSS THE RIVER URAL NEAR THE NEW  
INDUSTRIAL TOWN OF MAGNITOGORSK.

produce the goods which the country sorely needed, and in the villages to coax the peasant-farmers to sow their fields and harvest as large a crop as they had done before the war. The peasant-farmer was allowed once more to trade freely in his grain; selling it on the market as he wished, either to a private merchant or to some Government body. A few factories were leased to foreign companies and a number of smaller ones to co-operative groups of workers. This was what was called the New Economic Policy, or more shortly N.E.P.

This restoration and rebuilding took several years and involved hard struggles. But by 1926 or 1927 the task of repairing the ravages of war and civil war had almost been completed. The fields were being sown again on a normal scale, and harvests were almost as large as they had been in peace-time. Damaged railway tracks and bridges had been repaired, damaged or worn-out locomotives replaced. Factories were working at something like their old capacity. Shops once again had their shelves plentifully stocked with things to sell, and housewives no longer needed to queue up for bread and meat and vegetables.

But the country remained a poor and backward one, with too little industry and too primitive methods of farming to provide her people with more than a very low standard of life. There were many things that her industry could not manufacture at all; and the things that it did make were turned out in very small quantities compared with the needs of her large population, three to four times the size of this country's. For example, the boots that her factories turned out were only sufficient to give every man, woman and child on the average a new pair of boots once every five and a half years. If you were to take the amount of cotton goods produced at that time in a year and divide them by the number of people in the country, you would find that they came to a little more than a quarter of the figure you would arrive at if you did the same for this country or U.S.A. What is known as "heavy industry"—industry producing iron and steel, heavy machinery and so forth—was specially



TURBINE-HOUSE OF THE DNIEPER-DAM POWER STATION.

the first of them even in those years when everything was still in confusion after the civil war, when people were tired and exhausted, and building materials and equipment were so scarce. Many people thought this Plan was far too ambitious to be possible of fulfilment; and Lenin was called an unpractical dreamer. But the schemes went boldly ahead, despite all kinds of obstacles and difficulties; and in the end the aims of the great Electrification Plan were more than fulfilled. In fact, fifteen years after this Electrification Plan, instead of power-stations with a total capacity of a million and three-quarter kilowatts, power-stations with a total capacity of nearly four and a half million kilowatts had been installed. Great rivers like the Dnieper and the Volga were dammed up, to create a fall of water that could be used to drive giant turbines. In other places power-stations were built near coal and peat, burning the coal or peat to generate electricity. Already by 1928 the country was producing two and a half times as much electricity as she had done in Tsarist days. Ten years later she was

weak in U.S.S.R. Measured per head of her people her blast-furnaces could only turn out about one-eighth the weight of iron that British furnaces turned out per head of the people in Britain; and of electricity her power-stations were only able to turn out, per head of her people, about one-twentieth of the electricity available for each person in our own country. The result was that outside the larger towns there could scarcely be any electricity at all; and in the villages, in the log-huts of the peasant-farmers, the only form of lighting in the long winter-nights was dim, smoky kerosene-lamps.

It was clear that the only way of overcoming the country's poverty and backwardness was to build more factories, to mine more coal and metal-ore from deep underground, to multiply the number of power-stations turning out electricity to light the streets and the homes, the offices and the factories, and to give power to drive machinery in the new factories. With more boot factories, spinning mills, clothing factories and the like, there could be more clothing and other things in the shops for people to buy. But in order to build more factories and power-stations, the country had first to have more steel to provide the girders and framework for modern factory buildings and more cement to lay the foundations; it had to have more metal of all kinds from which to make the machinery to put into the factories; it had to have more heavy engineering works capable of making the machinery for spinning or weaving or lasting shoes, of making the armatures and turbines for new power-stations, of turning out new railway engines to draw the loaded goods trains across her thousands of miles of railway, and new steamboats to ply up and down her rivers and her coast-line.

Already in 1920, before the civil war was finally ended, Lenin had got together a group of engineers to draw up a great Electrification Plan for the whole of Russia. This was a gigantic programme, stretching over the next fifteen years, for covering the country with a network of new power-stations. A start was actually made with building

importing ordinary shop-goods to go on the shelves and counters of shops for people to buy. And to pay for these things from other countries, other products of Russian factories and farms (even some foodstuffs) had to be exported abroad in return, despite the fact that such things were in great demand at home.

After the First Five Year Plan came a Second. By the end of the Second, at the end of 1937, Soviet industry had been so modernised and developed that it could turn out four times as much coal and steel and cement, and over three times as much oil and iron and paper as the old Russian industry could turn out in 1913. Quite new industries, like motors, tractors, aeroplanes, the making of copper and aluminium and artificial rubber, had been started. For example, Soviet industry was able to produce more than 200,000 motor-cars of all kinds in a year, whereas ten years before it could barely produce one thousand. By 1938 the U.S.S.R. had become the largest producer of tractors and railway engines in the world. New railways had been built, some existing lines double-tracked, and some parts of the railway system electrified. It had been planned, if war had not come, to increase the length of electrified lines by the end of 1942 to 2,000 miles, or nearly six times the distance from London to Edinburgh. New towns had sprung up by the score where only villages or even open country had previously been.

After the Second Five Year Plan yet a Third was launched, to complete the work of construction that the other two had begun. This Third Plan had only completed three years of its course when Hitler launched his attack in June 1941, and the Nazis started bombing and blasting the many fine new towns and buildings and factories and power-stations that the Soviet people had built with so much effort and so much sacrifice during the past twelve years.

But industry could not be developed and modernised without a modernising of farming as well. New towns and new factories needed more foodstuffs and new raw materials



A SQUARE IN MOSCOW.

Note the new trolley-buses. The building in the centre is a modern hotel.

turning out nearly twenty times as much electrical power as there had been back in 1913.

In 1928 a still more ambitious Plan, called the First Five Year Plan, was launched. It dealt, not only with electricity, but with the whole of industry, transport and agriculture as well. Its intention was to cover the land, not only with power-stations, but with new factories of every kind, to build new railways and roads, open up new mines; to start entirely new industries to make things like motor-cars and aeroplanes and synthetic rubber that had not been made in the country before. This Plan gave special attention to "heavy industry": to building new blast-furnaces and steel-furnaces, new engineering plants to turn out the metal and make the metal into machinery that could make more machinery for the new factories that were to be built. This meant turning all the available labour and all the available building materials on to the task of constructing factories. It meant importing from abroad things like turbines and electrical transformers and scientific instruments and machine tools, instead of

it) when small private property had given way to some kind of collective ownership and collective production in the countryside.

The Soviet Government realised that the only way of bringing a sufficiently large and quick change in the methods of farming was to induce the farmers to put their small holdings together, along with their ploughs and horses and cattle, to form large "collective farms" to be run co-operatively by all the farmers who joined them. To develop collective farms at a very fast rate was, accordingly, included in the programme which the Five Year Plan laid down. It was, in fact, essential to the success of the other parts of the Plan.

This represented nothing less than a revolutionary change in the whole basis of village life; and it was not carried through easily. Many farmers resisted the change, especially the richer ones who had most to lose from it. Instead of each man running his own farm and keeping the produce of it himself, the members of the collective farm were to run it jointly and to share the produce of their common effort. But despite enormous difficulties, the Government plan was in the end successful; and within a few years the larger half of the land was organised in collective farms instead of in the old small individual peasant farms. By the end of the Second Five Year Plan more than nine in every ten peasant farmers had joined collective farms.

But, just as agriculture had to supply more food and raw materials for the towns and for industry, if the industrial part of the Plan was to be carried out, so it was also necessary for industry to supply the countryside with thousands of new tractors and harvesting machines if the new collective farms were to prove superior to the old and to gather in larger harvests. This was done by building many new tractor factories (like the one just north of Stalingrad beside the river Volga, which in September 1942 became the scene of fierce fighting in the heroic battle of Stalingrad). Already by the end of the First Five Year Plan there were 150,000 tractors available, enough to plough one-third of

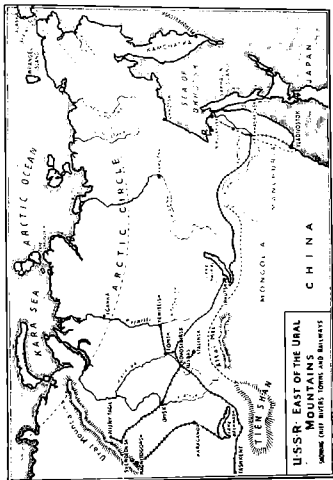


NEW BUILDING IN MOSCOW. A BLOCK OF FLATS

coming off the land and flowing into the towns. It was impossible to improve farming, at least at all rapidly, on the basis of the old dwarf peasant holdings. For one thing, the farms were too small and their owners too rooted to old-fashioned methods of cultivation. In 1928 more than half the sowing on the farms was still done by hand, and more than a third of the threshing was done with the old-fashioned hand-flail about which we read in the Bible. You cannot easily employ a tractor or a modern combine-harvester on a small 8- to 10-acre holding. But you can on a large farm of several thousand acres, with extensive fields across which machines can drive back and forth without having to spend all their time turning corners at the end of the field or the furrow. Moreover, it was only large farms that could provide a large and growing surplus of foodstuffs for the town population—a surplus, that is, over and above what the farmers needed for themselves.

Linked with these economic considerations was a further one: that the country could only become a socialist country (which the Soviet Government designed to make





the whole arable area over that vast land that is almost a continent. Five years later, when the Second Five Year Plan was completed, there were nearly three times that number.

## Chapter 6

### THE ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY OF THE - - - - U.S.S.R. - - - -

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SOMETHING has been said in the first chapter about the area and population of the U.S.S.R. and about its variety of races, of climate and of economic resources. Covering nearly half Europe and a third of Asia, the country enjoys almost every variety of climate from arctic in the north to sub-tropical in the deserts of Central Asia. Even the European part of it is subject to much greater extremes of temperature than we are accustomed to in the west: hot in summer and very cold in winter. In the summer it is warm even in the north, round the shores of the White Sea and the Kola Peninsula. In July at Archangel the mean temperature is nearly 60° Fahrenheit, or only a few degrees less than London. In winter almost the whole country has an average temperature that is below freezing-point. Rivers and lakes are frozen hard; wheeled traffic as well as sledges cross wide rivers by lanes across the ice. In the north it is so cold that breath freezes as it leaves the mouth. Even the water of the White Sea is frozen over, and the port of Archangel is usually closed in the winter months; although Murmansk, farther north, is actually warmer and is able to be kept open as a port in winter. In middle Russia, in Moscow, the mean temperature is below freezing-point for five months of the year, although from May to August Moscow is as warm as (or even a trifle warmer than) London. Even in the south, on the steppes between

In the European part the most important as well as best-known river flows not into the ocean but into an inland sea. This is the Volga, which rises in the north-west not far below Leningrad in some low hills called the Valdai Hills, and after making a wide sweep to the north-east and east of Moscow finally flows into the Caspian Sea close to Astrakhan. The other rivers of the European part can be distinguished according as they flow northwards or southwards. Among the waters which eventually find their way into the Black Sea are the Dniester, which rises in the Carpathians, the Dnieper, which rises not far to the west of Moscow, and the Don, with its tributary the Donetz. The rivers flowing northward are shorter and on the whole less famous: the Volkhov, the Onega, the Dvina and the Pechora.

The country can be thought of as divided into a number of belts stretching roughly from west to east. In the extreme north, from the White Sea eastward across the northern part of Siberia, are the frozen wastes of the Arctic region called *tundra*, where very little grows at any time of the year and the earth is permanently frozen to a depth of several feet. Here there are glaciers and their moraines, thin moss and lichen and occasionally stunted fir trees; but there are (or were until recently) few living beings besides polar bears and occasional settlements of peoples called Lapps. The only way of travelling is by river in summer and sledges during the rest of the year. Farther south there are reindeer; and in recent years exciting experiments have been made in what is called Polar agriculture—the cultivation of crops in these frozen regions. Special Polar stations have been set up there, and scientific exploration work has been carried on, in order to learn more about the resources and the geography of this hitherto deserted and neglected region. Almost a third of the whole area of the country lies to the north of what was before known as “the boundary-line of agriculture.” To-day this boundary-line has been pushed farther north. There has grown up something of a mining industry in this region—mining for coal and apatite.

the Don and the Volga, the earth is covered from November to February with a thick carpet of snow. In Astrakhan on the Caspian Sea in January the average temperature throughout the month is less than 20° Fahrenheit, whereas in London it is nearly 40°.

Most of European Russia forms part of the mid-European plain which stretches across Poland and Germany. From Poland this plain extends across the whole centre of Russia to the river Volga, and beyond the Volga as far as the Urals. The Urals are a low wooded mountain range, running north and south and dividing European Russia from Siberia. They form a region rich in minerals: coal, iron, nickel, bauxite, chrome and copper; and at the feet of the Urals to the west and south-west there is oil, which is now being developed to form what they now call the Second Baku. The great plain is broken by the Urals, but it is not ended. It continues into Siberia until it meets the curve of the mountain range round the northern frontier of Mongolia: mountains which branch out into Siberia from the massive circle of mountains and mountain plateaux that occupies the whole centre of Asia.

This plain is crossed by many great rivers, which have always been important avenues of trade. In the Asiatic part of the country these all flow northward or else north-east. Most of them rise among the mountain ranges which divide U.S.S.R. from China or Mongolia and flow through the forest belt into the frozen Arctic. Most westerly of them is the Ob, which rises in the Altai mountains and is joined on the way by its tributary the Irtysh, which flows down from the Tian Shan range. Next to it is the Yenisei, which rises across the frontier in the mountains of Mongolia. The Lena river, famed for the gold-fields along its middle reaches, has its source near lake Baikal. Flowing eastward into the Pacific is the Amur, which for nearly 1,000 miles of its course forms the frontier between U.S.S.R. and Jap-controlled Manchukuo. In the north-east corner, in the land of the Yakuts and Chukots, are the Indigirka, the Kolyma and the Anadyr.



WEDGED IN THE ICE: THE ICE-BREAKER YERMAK.

learning for the first time to plant vegetables and fodder-grass, and on the fodder-grass to feed cows.

This is how a visitor from England a few years ago described one of these new towns within the Arctic region—Igarka, near the mouth of the river Yenisei: "The streets of Igarka, as everything else in it, are built of timber, and are, in fact, little else than bridges of well-polished beams over ground that is caked in ice for most of the year and dissolves into swamp during the short intensive summer of ninety days of almost continuous sunshine. Motor-cars, lorries, trucks, water-carts and little bogies that carry timber in hidden claws between their wheels, all boom and throb cheerfully along these floating parquets. . . . Five to eight feet below the surface the ground is perpetually frozen. In the first winter of human habitation—when the huge brick-stoves were blazing furiously to keep the citizens of Igarka warm—this age-old ice started melting on the surface. Pillars (in the timber houses) sank in, walls sagged. A different method is adopted now. The ground-floor is raised by 10 inches or so above the surface



TIMBER FLOATING DOWN A RIVER NEAR THE UPPER WATERS OF THE VOLGA.

Note the lumbermen on rafts, controlling the movement of the logs.

Electric power-stations have been built there and fish-tinning works, and towns with many thousands of inhabitants, like the town of Igarka (with a population of nearly 20,000), which is nearly seventy miles inside the Arctic Circle. Here, in specially prepared patches of ground, potatoes, cabbages and carrots, wheat and barley and fodder-grass are grown during the brief summer, which lasts little more than two months. On these cultivated patches stones have been cleared, swamps drained, the acidity of the soil neutralised by the application of chemicals, and specially selected quick-growing and quick-ripening types of seed have been sown. It has been found that the lack of heat in the sun's rays is partly made up for by the fact that in these polar regions the sun shines at night as well as day, and over a large area does not set at all for six weeks in the summer. Even the nomad fisher-folk and reindeer-hunters, who were ignorant of plant-growing in the past and lived only on reindeer flesh and fish, are now

of the ground so that air can circulate freely underneath. Most of the houses in Igarka are built in the style of Swiss chalets. But the public buildings, the theatre and club, the cinema, the fire-station, the Port Authority building and the Town Hall are fine experiments in modern architecture." (H. P. Smolka, *Forty Thousand against the Arctic*, page 168.)

The southern edge of this frozen region gradually merges into the second belt—the belt of thick forest, largely fir and pine, and marshes. This forest belt extends from Leningrad northwards, through Karelia, and eastwards into Siberia, where it stretches across those great rivers which flow northwards into the Arctic Ocean. This belt is as wide as from the south of England to the highlands of Scotland, and in places is more than 1,000 miles wide. Here timber-felling and wood-working are the main industries. Lumberjacks, moving their camp from one forest-clearing to the next, fell the trees; and the timber is then floated down the rivers or drawn on sledges in the winter over the snow-tracks to the nearest port or railhead. Also there are trappers in this forest-area, hunting animals for their furs. In Karelia the forest is broken up by numerous lakes. Between these lakes canals have been built to form continuous waterways: for example, the Stalin Canal, which connects lake Onega with the White Sea and opens a continuous waterway between the Baltic and the White Sea. This area is rich in minerals, especially the Kola Peninsula, which divides the Barents Sea from the White Sea: minerals which are now being developed—nickel, bauxite (for aluminium), copper and apatite (used as agricultural fertiliser) and iron ore. Hydro-electric stations have been built to tap the power of forest waterfalls; and these supply electricity to drive the saw-mills, the cellulose and paper mills and the mining enterprises of this region.

To the south of the forests comes the third belt of the steppes. This is open, gently undulating country. Part of it, in the south-west, is very fertile. Here it includes the so-called Black Earth region, rich in its waving corn-







A STEAMBOAT ON THE NEW MOSCOW-VOLGA CANAL.

fields, which stretches across the Ukraine to the Don and the Volga. This black soil is found elsewhere in the world on the edge of desert belts ; but its greatest extent is in the U.S.S.R. Its origin is interesting. During the great ice-age, glaciers stretched down into the steppes and over a long period produced huge quantities of fine, silty rock debris, or glacial mud. As the ice retreated and the climate grew drier, this material was distributed by the action of winds, thus producing great areas of what is called loess-soil. This loess is fine, calcareous silt, soft and similar in texture over wide areas, but quite different from the coarser sands of the sub-tropical desert, which are produced by wind-erosion alone. Towards the north of the steppes, as the forest belt is approached, the rainfall increases, and with it the amount of vegetation ; and this provides the dark-coloured, decaying organic matter, or humus, which forms some 10 per cent. of the soil called Black Earth. The Black Earth, therefore, is a loess, formed in ancient times by glaciers and then by the wind, with about 10 per cent. of humus in it, and of extraordinary fertility.

The farther east one goes across this steppe belt, the drier it becomes and the greater the variation between winter and summer temperatures; and it is in the eastern half of this belt that Russia's history has seen the worst crop-failures and famines as a result of drought. When one passes across the lower reaches of the Volga, and north and north-eastward of the Caspian Sea, where the Black Earth belt merges into what is known as the Khirghiz steppe, with rather sandy soil (though rich in nitrogen) and large salt-marshes near the shores of the Caspian, one comes to barren semi-desert where little can grow (although recently attempts have been made to fertilise and improve it).

Finally, in the extreme south is a mixed belt of mountain ranges, with fertile river valleys and lowlands at their feet, and sandy desert. Round the shores of the Black Sea, particularly in the Crimea, there is country and climate similar to the south of France or Italy or other countries along the northern shores of the Mediterranean; and for

the size of those of the Donbas, and among the largest in the world. To-day this is not only a growing mining area, it is also an important centre of industry. New blast-furnaces and steel works, engineering and chemical works, have risen in a group of towns lying between the river Ob and the Altai mountains: Novosibirsk, Leninsk, Kemerovo and Stalinsk, which to-day have nearly a million inhabitants between them. Believed to be as rich as Kusbas, but less accessible at present, is the Tungus basin farther north along the Yenisei. Important coal deposits are also to be found at Karaganda in the steppes of Kazakhstan, near to the important new copper district of Kounrad; near Irkutsk by lake Baikal in the Far Eastern territory in the valley of the Amur river; at Yakutsk in the north-east in the gold-yielding valley of the Lena river; and to the extreme north of the Urals in the frozen valley of the river Pechora. In the Amur valley iron is also to be found (as it is in the Lena valley); and iron and steel works have grown up here in recent years at Khabarovsk and Komsomolsk, close to the Pacific coast.

Russia was always known for her cotton-fields and her cotton industry. The chief centres of cotton-growing are the river valleys of Central Asia, in what was formerly the Tsarist province of Turkestan. This cotton used to be sent about 2,000 miles to be spun and woven in the cotton-mills of Moscow and the nearby town of Ivanovo (sometimes called "the Russian Manchester"). But in Central Asia where most of the cotton is grown water is scarce. Rainfall is scanty, and the cotton planters depended on the rivers and on the melting snows of the mountain slopes. Under the Five Year Plans vast new irrigation schemes were undertaken, to bring water along artificial channels to moisten the parched desert and to open up new lands where cotton could be grown. As a result, about three times as much cotton is grown as in former days. At the same time new and up-to-date cotton-mills were built, near the cotton-fields, in the cities of Tashkent, Ferghana, Stalinabad and Askhabad.

this reason this Black Sea coast is sometimes spoken of as "the Russian Riviera." Between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea there is the Caucasus mountain range. Across the Caspian to the east is desert, south and south-east of the Aral Sea. This is intersected by the fertile river valleys of the Syr Daria and the Amu Daria, which flow north-west into the inland Sea of Aral. Along these fertile strips lie the ancient cities of Khiva, Bokhara and Tashkent, and Samarkand in a fertile belt between the two main river valleys: cities of ancient monuments and of legend; cities that once were fair and prosperous and then decayed and to-day are being revived and modernised. Farther east at the sources of these rivers are the mountain ranges of the Pamirs and Tian Shan—mountain ranges that are part of the large mountainous belt that becomes the Himalayas, north of India, and stretches across Tibet. Beyond the Tian Shan range, to the north-east, lie the Altai mountains, the spurs of which extend far into Mongolia, and the northern edge of which forms the boundary between U.S.S.R. and Mongolia.

In the last century in most countries the big industrial centres were usually where coal was to be found. Coal is still important as a magnet to industry, but less so in this century of electricity than it used to be. One of the richest coal areas in the country is in the basin of the Donetz river in the Ukraine. It is called the Donbas, and it is sometimes referred to as the "Russian South Wales." In Tsarist Russia nearly nine-tenths of the coal came from here. Not far away there are large deposits of very high-grade iron ore. Consequently this was, and remains, the chief centre of industry in the land, especially a centre of metal industry.

But there are several other regions which also have rich coal seams beneath the ground as well as other minerals. Most of these were hardly developed at all, and some not even explored, until ten or fifteen years ago. Chief of these is the newly developed Kusnersk basin (Kusbas) in Siberia, over 1,000 miles east of the Urals. The total deposits of this coalfield are believed to be about six times



AT THE NORTH POLE.

The camp of the expedition of four, led by Papanin. Here they lived, while their ice-floe drifted, from May 1937 till February 1938.

centres have grown up in the middle of farming regions; for it has been part of the Government's policy to break down the contrast between town and country—to distribute industry (at any rate lighter industries) over the countryside, wherever this is practicable, and to give the new collective farm villages some of the conveniences of life in towns.

Among the most exciting of the voyages of exploration which in recent years have won the interest of the world were the flights of Soviet airmen over the North Pole and the journeys through the ice of the northern sea to open a new north-west passage from the Atlantic across the White Sea and Kara Sea and through the Behring Straits into the Pacific. In 1937 the Russian airman Chkalov made his sensational non-stop flight from Moscow to San Francisco over the North Pole. Chkalov was followed a month later by Michael Gromov, who beat the previous record. Russians began to look forward to the time when it would be possible to start a regular passenger air-route over the

As industry is attracted to coal, so people gather where industry is; and the largest towns are to be found where thriving industries are. In old Russia the biggest concentrations of population were in the west. St. Petersburg (now Leningrad), the old capital, and Moscow, the present capital, were the largest cities. Cities like Kharkov and Kiev, the port of Odessa, the oil-town of Baku, Rostov-on-Don and Tashkent, the urban centre of Turkestan, were large cities with several hundred thousand inhabitants. But most other towns were no more than small or moderate-sized provincial centres; few of them larger than Oxford or Cambridge in this country. To-day the larger part of the people are still concentrated in the European part; and the Ukraine, which is particularly thickly peopled, contained before the war about a fifth of the inhabitants of U.S.S.R. Cities like Moscow and Leningrad have doubled in size; and in addition to them there are nine cities to-day with between half a million and a million people. But what is specially remarkable is the rapid growth in recent years of cities in the east, in the new industrial centres of Siberia and in Central Asia. This has been specially important in war-time; since it has enabled the Urals and Siberia to become centres of Soviet armament production, and enabled new aeroplane- and tank- and gun-factories to be developed (some of them evacuated there by feats of lightning organisation) to rival the older plants in the war-zone in the west. Many of these are quite new towns, their three-, four- or five-storey buildings rising up where previously no more than a village or even open steppe had been. Such are towns like Magnitogorsk in the Urals, which now has over 200,000 inhabitants, or Karaganda in the Khirghiz steppe. Even the port of Murmansk, where British convoys berth to-day, has more than 100,000, whereas it had less than 7,000 fifteen years ago. In recent years more than 100 new towns have been built, each of them with room for over 100,000 people to-day. But not all the new towns are giants, and not all are industrial regions. Many smaller



PROFESSOR OTTO SCHMIDT FEEDING BABY POLAR BEARS.

winter in the ice. The next year Professor Schmidt repeated the expedition in an ordinary cargo steamer of reinforced construction, the *Chelyuskin*. This left Murmansk in August. Its first task was to relieve the scientific colony on the Arctic outpost of Wrangel Island. In mid-September this task was done by the despatch of an aeroplane from the *Chelyuskin* to Wrangel Island, carrying radio-operators and food and bringing away members of the scientific staff who were due for relief. Within forty days of leaving Murmansk it reached a point only 200 miles from the Pacific. But here the pressure of ice was so great as to delay it for a whole month in the ice-field. Finally, in early November the Behring Straits were reached, and the ship was no more than two or three miles from the open sea. But misfortune overtook the ship when it was in sight of its goal. A storm in the Pacific drove the icefield, and the *Chelyuskin* with it, back northward again. By the following February the pressure of ice had become so great as to threaten to crush the ship. The expedition of 101 persons (including ten women and

THE ICE-BREAKER *TAIMYR*.

The ship which helped to rescue the Papanin expedition from their drifting ice-floe in the Greenland Sea. [Note the aeroplane on the ice beside the ship.]

North Pole as the shortest route between U.S.S.R. and U.S.A. In the same year as the flights of Chkalov and Gromov a scientific expedition of four men, headed by Papanin, was taken by aeroplane to the North Pole. The expedition started off from Rudolf Land, the most northern island of Franz Josef Land, where a Soviet polar station had been established for the first time eight years before, 600 miles from the Pole. Once at the North Pole the four men established a camp and set up their scientific instruments. Here they remained from May till the following February, taking soundings and scientific observations and keeping in touch with the outside world by wireless; while the ice-floe on which they had camped gradually drifted southward in the direction of Greenland.

Five years before this, an expedition under Professor Otto Schmidt in the ice-breaker *Sibiriakov* succeeded in making the north-west passage from the White Sea to the Behring Straits in sixty-five days. This was the first time the passage had ever been made without spending a whole



## Chapter 7

### - THE ECONOMIC SYSTEM -

THE economic system of the U.S.S.R. principally differs from that of other countries in that all industry is owned and run by the Government. Factories, land, railways are the property of the whole community (like roads and highways in this country), and not of private individuals or companies. True, the State sometimes leases out smaller factories or workshops to co-operative groups of workers and land is granted to farmers more or less for good so long as the land is well farmed and they do not transgress the State regulations which govern farming. About this we shall say more later. But all the main industries and large factories, the banks, railways, ships, airlines, dockyards, warehouses are in the hands of the State, and are controlled by salaried managers who are appointed by, and responsible for their actions to, the government-body that appoints them. This government-body is usually one of the Commissariats (ministries or Government departments) which have charge of particular branches of industry; the person appointed to the head of this Commissariat being a member of what is known as the Council of People's Commissars, which is the equivalent of our Cabinet.

Since private individuals cannot own capital (for example, shares in an industry or a bank or a railway) or land, people cannot get an income from owning things. People cannot draw income in the form of profit, interest or rent (except interest on a savings-bank account or on a Government savings-loan); and there has ceased to exist in U.S.S.R. a class of people that does so. The only way that people can earn money in the U.S.S.R. is in some sort of work for which they get paid, either in an office, in a factory or on a farm. In the towns nearly everyone who earns gets his income in the form of a wage or a salary,

two children) with its stores had to be transferred to the ice. From there they were rescued two months later, without any loss of life, by aeroplanes and the ice-breaker *Krassin*. Thus ended one of the most daring pieces of exploration of modern times.

A north-west passage, open to navigation throughout the summer by ordinary ships with space for large cargoes, remains a project for the future, when still more has been learned about these regions and difficulties have been overcome. But to-day there are thirty-six stations, with a total staff of nearly 500 persons, along this Arctic route between two oceans. A chain of air bases has been set up, to provide regular air-communication with these northern islands and their Polar stations. In summer ice-breakers keep open a route through the Kara Sea, along which ships can pass to the mouths of the Yenisei, the Ob and the Pechora; while at the other end ships from Vladivostok pass through the Behring Straits to the mouths of the Lena and the Indigirka, and bring back timber, furs and minerals, which have no other outlet except down the rivers into these Arctic seas.



PEACE-TIME IN FAIR UKRAINE.  
A collective farm village near Kiev.



A HANDICRAFT WORKER.

Painting wooden jars and bowls in a village workshop near Gorky.

whether as a worker in a factory, a clerk in an office, a teacher, a scientist or an actor or a writer (although authors get paid royalties according to the number of printed pages in a book and artists can sell the pictures they paint). On the outbreak of war the total number of wage-earners and salary-earners employed by the State was about 30,000,000.

But there are also a certain number of workers who work in small self-governing "producers' co-operatives" (the Russian name for them is *artel*). For example, various handicraft trades are carried on in this way, such as boot-repairing, hand shoe-making, sports goods, wood-carving and furniture-making, some timber-cutting and plywood-making, dressmaking, pottery and so forth. These co-operatives generally exist in trades where artistic products are made (sometimes artists or sculptors form a partnership of this kind) or speciality products which are not suitable for making by mass-production methods in large factories. A special example of co-operative groups is among fishermen. Altogether over 1,000 such groups exist along the coasts



A WOMAN COLLECTIVE FARMER AND STAKHANOVITE IN  
UZBEKISTAN.

most of the farming was still done by individual owner-worker peasants, each family working its own small holding and selling the produce as and when it could. Collective farms existed then, in the first ten years of the Soviet régime, but were relatively few. It was during the First Five Year Plan that the number of collective farms increased enormously by individual peasant-farmers putting their land and their animals and their implements together to form a co-operative group, owning these implements and farming the land in partnership. To-day the separate individual farms are the exception. These old-style individual peasants still exist, but are comparatively few in number, and their farms cover little more than one-hundredth part of all the land that is cultivated.

Collective farms cannot do entirely as they please. They have to be registered under certain statutes (in a rather similar way to which friendly societies and universities are controlled by statutes in our own country). But within these limits they govern their own affairs, through meetings

and on the rivers and lakes. These own the boats and the tackle; and there are now regional organisations of them, and a centre in Moscow, which link them up and help them to obtain new equipment and to market their catch. These small co-operative groups which work for themselves exist alongside larger State-owned trawler fleets for deep-sea fishing, with their own wharves and refrigerating establishments, ice-works, barrel-factories and fish-waste factories. Again, the hunters and trappers among the people of the far north are to-day grouped in co-operatives of this kind, similarly to the fishermen and the town artisans.

Sometimes these co-operative workers work in their own homes with their own tools, merely selling their products and getting their materials through the co-operative society to which they belong. But in the majority of cases they work together in workshops which they jointly own and run, sharing out the proceeds of the sale on the market of their joint products. The money they get is not, strictly speaking, a wage, but is a kind of co-operative dividend. They are co-operative owner-workers who share out the proceeds of their work. But since the dividend is usually shared out in proportion to the work that each does, it is very similar in character to the wage that other workers receive. Altogether there are something like 20,000 different societies of this kind and between 2,000,000 and 3,000,000 workers belonging to them.

To-day most agriculture is organised on a similar co-operative basis in what are called "collective farms," and the vast majority of farmers get their livelihood in a similar way to the co-operative craftsmen that we have just described—by sharing out the proceeds of their joint labour. This sharing is done on the basis of the "labour days" contributed by each person to the work of the farm; more responsible or skilled work being valued rather more highly in terms of "labour days" than less skilled work. The sharing is partly in actual farm-products—so much grain or milk or vegetables or meat—partly in money resulting from the sale of part of the harvest. Back in the 1920's



TRACTOR-PLOUGHING ON A STATE FARM IN THE NORTH  
CAUCASUS REGION.



A COLLECTIVE FARM IN THE NORTH CAUCASUS REGION.

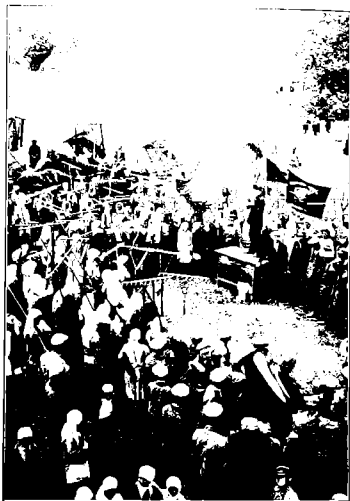
from time to time of all the members, who elect the management committee of the farm. One thing that they are obliged to do is to deliver each year a fixed proportion of the farm's produce to the Government buying organisations, for which they get paid, but at a price considerably below the ordinary market price. (In a sense, this takes the place of payment of rent and taxes, and it also controls the type of crops that the farms grow, since nowadays the deliveries have to be in stated kinds of produce.) These deliveries go to provide supplies for the towns and the factories. Whatever the farm has over after supplying this fixed amount to the Government, it can sell as it pleases. For example, it may distribute some directly to its own members, as food for their households, or it may sell some of it in the market of a neighbouring town, setting up stalls or even shops for this purpose. Thus, if a farm works well and reaps a specially good harvest, it will have all the more available to dispose of in this way, and will be able to distribute a larger dividend to its members, both in money and in produce.





LOBBY OF A COLLECTIVE FARM CLUB IN THE CRIMEA.

But the collective farmers do not spend all their working time in the fields of the collective farm itself. Each member has the right to have allotted to him a small "farmstead," or large-size allotment of his own, up to two acres in size; and a considerable part of his time is spent on cultivating this. These allotments are mostly for growing market-garden produce for the needs of his family. But he can also keep on it chickens and a pig and a cow; and he is free to sell the produce of it as he wishes. In these collective-farm villages each family has its own house and garden and small farmstead round it. The collective farm itself often has, not only its central offices and barns, but also a kindergarten for small children, a school for older children, a club and possibly a cinema, and organises social activities like lectures, discussions, concerts, dances, for its members. At ploughing and harvest time it can hire machinery to do the ploughing or harvesting from what are called Machine Tractor Stations. These are a sort of Government tractor-garage, covering each a whole district. They lend out tractors and other types of machinery to the

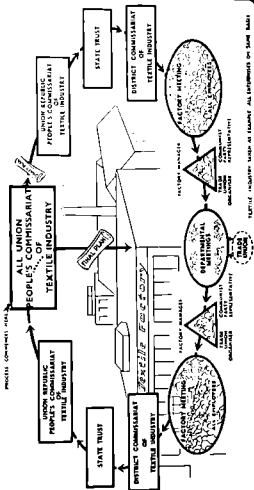


**DISCUSSING THE HARVESTING CAMPAIGN.**

A meeting on a Collective Farm in the Ukraine. (Note the banners awarded to the best field-brigades.)

# INDUSTRIAL PLANNING

## HOW EACH FACTORY TAKES PART IN THE PLAN OF WORK



surrounding farms and service them, receiving in exchange a certain share of the harvested crop.

In addition to collective farms, there are a certain number of State farms. These are usually larger than the collective farms. Their managers are appointed by the Government department responsible for these farms, and their workers work for wages in the same way that factory workers do. Usually they undertake more specialised types of farming than other farms do: for example, there are many special State livestock farms, or cotton or beet-sugar or dairy farms. On the fertile terraces of the hill-slopes round the Black Sea coast there are State wine farms; one of them, consisting of the former Tsar's vineyard, continues to produce Russian equivalents of French and Rhine wines and champagne of excellent quality, now no longer for the Court gatherings of the Tsar but for ceremonial occasions of factories or collective farms or of trade-unions or soviets. When in the early days of the revolution the big estates were divided up among the peasants, those estates that had been well farmed on modern lines were kept apart from this dividing-up process and turned into State farms. Most of these have continued to this day as model or experimental farms, and their number was later added to. Their job is to set an example of good cultivation and up-to-date methods to other farms. But the number of them, and their importance in the countryside as a whole, is at present nothing like equal to that of the collective farms. To-day they occupy about one-eighth of the total cultivated land in the country, and between 3,000,000 and 4,000,000 workers are employed on them.

planned economy; that everything is regulated by a unified economic plan.

The body that works out this Plan is called the State Planning Commission, or for short *Gosplan*. It is a large body of economists and engineers who advise the Government on all planning matters; and it has branches in the various republics or districts and also in the various industries and the groups of factories in each industry. When the Plan has been prepared in its final form, it is submitted for consideration to the supreme Government body, the Council of People's Commissars; and after it has been adopted by them, it becomes the programme that all heads of industry must observe and carry out to the best of their ability.

But this Plan is not just something thought out in the heads of a few experts sitting in tall buildings in Moscow, and then put on paper as orders for everyone all over the country to carry out. Before it is finished it is made the subject of very full discussion with everyone concerned; and each industry is given the opportunity of preparing its own draft programme of what it thinks it can do. These first draft plans are discussed in the various industries, including the various factories, where they are laid before special production-conferences of the workers in the factory, at which the objects of the Plan are explained, and criticisms, suggestions and amendments are made. In this way the Plan becomes more firmly rooted in actual facts and possibilities; and also every worker is made to feel that the Plan is something that he has himself helped to build—that it is his own, and not just someone else's, "higher up." These various draft plans and amendments and criticisms are then passed back again to Gosplan, the central planning body, which dovetails the large number of separate plans together and sees that each fits in with all the rest. For example, it has got to see that all the various plans for building new houses for factories and power-stations fit the supplies of bricks and cement and structural steel that are going to be made available, or that

## - THE PLAN AND HOW IT WORKS -

HOW, then, are State farming and State industry regulated? What decides how much a particular factory shall produce, how many new factories shall be built and where they shall be built? In other countries each business firm is free to do as it likes (so long as it keeps within the law); and the firm is guided in what it does by the desire to make a profit for the owner (or owners) of the business. In the U.S.S.R. things are different. Industry is governed by an economic plan, worked out in advance for the whole country; and managers of factories or heads of industries are appointed to carry out this Plan, and can be removed at any time if they fail in their duty. Their duty is to run the factory or the industry with the maximum efficiency, so as to produce as much as possible in the way that is least wasteful of raw material, of workers' time and energy and of machinery. The Plan is a vast programme, or collection of programmes, of production, setting out what the various industries and factories or State farms shall turn out in the year. It also sets out the proper amounts of raw material (cotton or leather or steel, as the case may be) to be allotted to various industries, since these are the amounts which are judged necessary in each case to fulfil the programme of output. Yet again, the Plan lays down what new factories shall be built, and what machinery shall be allotted to existing ones to enable them to modernise or to extend the existing works. When a factory, or group of factories, has fulfilled its programme, whether it be of boots or furniture or motor-cars or electrical turbines, it is not free to sell these at any price it chooses. The prices are fixed for it, as are also the prices at which finished goods are priced in the shops for the ordinary person to buy. This is what is meant when the system is called a socialist

cannot always be guessed at or allowed for fully a long time ahead.

To give an idea of the kind of thing that the Five Year Plans actually included, one may quote the following examples from the Second Five Year Plan. Among many other things, the Plan laid down these tasks to be completed by 1937. It provided for the construction of a number of new railway lines, totalling about 7,000 miles in all, and the electrification of large sections of existing lines; also the completion of fifteen new giant regional power-stations, whereby the electrical power capacity of the country could be more than doubled. It planned to increase the number of motor vehicles in the country eight-fold to a figure of half a million, and the number of motor-tractors on farms by nearly four times. It gave directions for the building of 21 new boot and shoe factories, capable of turning out 100,000,000 pairs of shoes a year, 12 large woollen mills, 12 large linen mills, 15 large cotton mills and 18 knitting factories; for the construction of 45 blast furnaces, 164 open-hearth furnaces and 107 rolling mills. In the case of coal it provided for the opening of 178 new pits and the mechanisation of coal-getting and coal-haulage so as to cut nine-tenths of all coal by machinery. As a result of such measures, it stated a target-figure for coal output in 1937  $2\frac{1}{2}$  times the 1932 figure.

Of course, it by no means follows that what is planned is actually carried out. Circumstances may change; mistakes may be made and unforeseen difficulties may crop up. Here the Second Five Year Plan was a big improvement on the First—in carrying out successfully what it aimed to do. But the surprising thing about both these Plans is the extent to which they succeeded in doing the ambitious things they set out to do; and the boldness of what they succeeded in doing is more striking than the mistakes and failures.

In planning the production of things, Gosplan is also planning the employment of people. It is deciding how many of the available workers shall be used to build power-



A STATION ON THE NEW MOSCOW "METRO."

the programme for spinning and weaving cotton goods in the various cotton factories fits in with the supplies of raw cotton that the cotton-fields of Central Asia or of the South Caucasus are expected to harvest. Only then is the Plan prepared in its final form for submission to the Government.

It was in this way that the Five Year Plans, about which we have spoken, were prepared. These sketched out in general outline the lines along which industry and farming were to work over the next five years. Inside each Five Year Plan there were fuller and more detailed *annual* Plans, and often plans for each quarter of the year as well. These Plans for a shorter period fill out the general framework of the longer-term Plans, and make any adjustments that prove necessary in the light of what has happened during the last year or the last quarter, adapting the plan to seasonal needs, the state of the harvest and other influences which





CHANGING SHIFTS AT THE STALINGRAD TRACTOR-FACTORY

stations and railways, with an eye to the future, and how many shall be employed in turning out things that can appear in a shop at an early date for people to buy. One of the features of the Five Year Plans was the very large extent to which employment was given to workers on big construction projects, even though it meant that the number of workers who could be turning out boots and clothes and furniture and tinned foodstuffs could only be increased rather slowly. Part of the Plan is concerned with arrangements for training sufficient high-grade technicians or skilled workers to enable the new factories being built to be properly staffed. For example, the Second Five Year Plan arranged for the training of 5,000,000 skilled workers. It is also concerned with seeing that houses and canteens and clubs are in the places where the jobs are going to be. But this does not mean that people are "planned" and moved about in peace-time like soldiers in an army. In war-time, of course, in all countries things are different; and to win the war we have to take orders in all sorts of ways. But in peace-time Soviet workers are free (with certain exceptions) to take employment where they wish and to change their job if they desire. And for ten years and more jobs have been more plentiful than people to fill them; unemployment having ceased to exist soon after the First Five Year Plan had started to employ millions of additional workers on the new construction-sites.

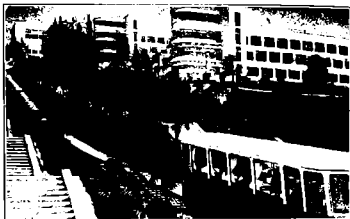
The head of an industry or of a factory is responsible for what happens in his industry or factory; and when he gives an order, it is his duty to see that this order is carried out and the workers' duty to obey the order. At the same time, the trade-unions have a voice in deciding who shall be appointed to manage industries; and although trade-unions do not have the right to appoint these managers, they are consulted before the appointment is made. The workers, through their trade-union, have an opportunity of voicing criticism of a manager, and, if they can prove that he is not doing his duty, of securing his removal. Membership of trade-unions is voluntary; although trade-unionists get



VESTIBULE OF A NEW SANATORIUM.

who have been incapacitated by accident and disease; pensions to workers over sixty, and pensions to dependent survivors in a family when their breadwinner has died. Control over all such payments is in the hands of elected "insurance committees" in each factory; and the money for them is contributed by industry as a whole and by the Government. In addition, all workers are entitled to free medical services for themselves and their families, if they are ill; and they are also entitled to a fortnight's holiday with pay each year. The trade-unions also run rest-homes and sanatoria for their members.

A large part of the work of trade-unions and of the factory committee is therefore concerned with looking after the conditions of the workers, as is the case with trade-unions in other countries. But this is only one-half of their duty. They have also been deeply concerned with helping to improve the way their factories are run, and to develop among workers a sense of responsibility towards their work and their factory—the feeling that it is their factory and they have a duty towards it, to be punctual, to look after the machinery, to give of their best and make



A REST-HOME AT SOCHI ON THE BLACK SEA COAST.

certain privileges, and over nine-tenths of all workers belong. Wages are fixed by consultation between the Government bodies which draw up the Plan and the trade-unions; and the trade-union in each industry makes a written agreement with the management of the industry and of each factory providing for how wages shall be paid and also for a number of matters relating to the running of the factory. In each factory the trade-union members elect a factory committee, which has certain recognised rights and duties in looking after working conditions and the general discipline of the works. These factory committees have charge of the running of the factory crèche and kindergarten, the club and canteen, which nowadays exist in most of the large factories. Since 1933 trade-unions have also looked after the social insurance payments. These payments are comprehensive, and occupy a very important place in the life of the Soviet worker, giving him a large measure of social security. They include payments of money to all workers who are sick or have had an accident; payments of between half and full normal wages to workers

tens and hundreds of thousands; and these pioneers were busy training other workers to work by the new methods that they had invented.

For the ordinary citizen money plays much the same part as it does anywhere else in the world. He receives his wages in money, and he can spend this money in a shop or put it in a savings bank until he wants it, or lend it to the Government by buying a piece of paper enrolling him as a subscriber to a Government loan and entitling him to a certain amount of interest per year, as happens in our own country if one puts one's money into Savings Bonds or into the Post Office Savings Bank. Similarly, collective farms or co-operative groups of craftsmen or fishermen or hunters are paid in money for what they sell to the Government or to a factory canteen; and they in turn distribute this money among their members or put it by in a collective savings-account for future use, or buy something collectively with it.

This money is issued by the State Bank, which decides how much it shall issue according to how much it estimates will be needed each year to pay wages and salaries or make payments to collective farmers. Like other things this is also included in the Plan. Government bodies, industries, State farms, etc., seldom use actual money among themselves: they only draw money to pay wages to people. But they keep accounts with the State Bank; and when one factory receives something from another, the Bank marks up a debt against it in the books of the Bank. Then when this factory supplies finished goods to the trading organisation or the shops, it gets marked with a credit in the books of the Bank to an amount equal to the value of these goods. Banks, therefore, exist as they do in other countries. But they are run by the Government, and what they do almost entirely consists of an elaborate system of book-keeping accounts between a lot of other branches of the Soviet Government. For individual people to deposit savings and draw out cash from time to time as they need it, there is the State Savings Bank, which has thousands of branches and agencies all over the country.

improvements wherever possible. The war has shown us some fine examples of the sacrifices endured by factory workers of Moscow, Leningrad, Stalingrad and other cities to keep production going in face of enormous difficulties. We have heard about the splendid spirit of men and women working on to produce arms and tanks within sound of the guns, even while the factory itself was being bombarded. We have heard of workers staying on in the factory for several days and nights on end until an urgent war-order had been completed. But this spirit is not peculiar to war-time. Something like it was to be found in peacetime too. Groups of workers would take the lead in improving their factories, forming themselves into what were called "shock-brigades" to set standards of good work and give an example to others. Sometimes the workers of one factory would issue a challenge to another factory to beat them with their output programme—what was called "socialist competition." Such competition, or emulation, is a common feature of all walks of life. It plays a large part in developing a team-spirit, and a community-spirit as well, since groups and institutions vie with one another to contribute more towards the common pool. It also helps to encourage ordinary people to become leaders; and in this the wall-newspapers (as they are called), which one finds in nearly every farm, factory or institution, packed with local suggestions and criticisms, and announcing the records of those who excel, have played a large part.

In 1935 a miner in the Donbas coalfield, called Alexei Stakhanov, started something new by working out a better method of hewing coal, and as a result enormously increased the amount of coal he was able to hew in a shift. Quickly others followed his example in other industries and introduced similar improvements—improvements in machinery and in the handling of it, improvements in the way they themselves worked or new ways of working in a team with two or three other workers. Soon there were not merely a few score or a few hundred imitators of Stakhanov: the number of "Stakhanovites," as they were called, ran into

tain range; also a Ukrainian Soviet Republic and a White Russian (or Byelorussian) Republic. A little later three more republics were formed out of what had previously been Turkestan—the Uzbek, the Turkmen and the Tadjik.

In December 1922, two months after the last invader, the Japs in Far East Siberia, had been expelled from Soviet territory, an All-Union Congress of Soviets was held at which the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was decided upon. This was a union of a number of separate republics; and it was legally adopted in a statute in the following year, 1923. The declaration which was issued when the Union was established stated: "From the first moment of their existence the Soviet Republics were united by the bonds of close co-operation and mutual assistance, which subsequently assumed the form of treaties of alliance. Whilst rendering to one another constant fraternal assistance, they nevertheless for a time remained separate States only united by treaties of alliance. The further development of their mutual relations and the requirements of the international position have now led them to combine into one united State. . . . This union of peoples with equal rights remains a purely voluntary union which excludes all possibility of national oppression, every republic enjoying the right to leave the union if it so desires. At the same time the door is left open for the voluntary entry into the union of other socialist republics that may be formed in the future."

This Union was a federal Government, in some respects similar to the United States of America (although in several important respects they are different). The legal position is that certain powers are given to the federal, or Union, Government in Moscow, and the separate republics have power over other things that are not specifically reserved to the central Government. If a law passed by a republic conflicts, however, with the law of the Union, the former must give way. Such things as foreign affairs, military and naval matters, railways and river transport, posts and telegraph, and the bigger industries are controlled by the

When a factory has turned out the goods according to the Plan, these are usually then delivered to a trading organisation which is concerned with handling the products of that industry. (Again, this is a State body, which works under the general Plan, and is not a private business.) This, in its turn, arranges the distribution of these goods, either to other factories if the goods are semi-manufactured goods or things used by other industries, or else, in the case of shop goods for the consumer, among the various shops. In recent years most of the shops that supply people in the towns have been run by the State or by special trading bodies organised by the town Soviets to run a network of shops. Some of these are fairly small shops, selling one type of thing, like the shops run by multiple-store companies in this country (Sainsbury's, Peark's, Eastman's, etc.). Some are big department stores, housed in large buildings several stories high and selling a wide variety of different things in different departments. In some cases the industry itself runs shops to display and sell its own products. The consumers' co-operative societies, which are like the co-operative societies in this country, nowadays have the big task of supplying the shopping facilities for the whole of the countryside; and nearly all the supply of things through village shops and collective farm stores are organised by them.

## --- Chapter 9

### - - THE POLITICAL SYSTEM - -

WE have seen that the U.S.S.R. is a union of sixteen different republics. Originally there was only the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic; which remains to-day the largest of them, because the Russians proper comprise half of the total population of the U.S.S.R. Later there came into being a Transcaucasian Federation, covering the peoples who dwell on the south side of the Caucasus moun-



the Crimea and of the Volga Tartars, the Buriat-Mongolian, the Mordvinian and the Yakut. Yet again, inside these republics there are twenty or so "autonomous regions" and "national areas," like those of the Jews in Biro-Bijan, of the primitive Chukots in the far north-east and the Oirots who live at the foot of the Altai mountains. The existence of autonomous regions enables these small groups of people to have their own language in schools, theatres and public places, their own national customs and officials of their own race. Where these "national minorities" (as they are called) form a compact group in a particular locality, but too small to be an "autonomous region" on its own, the national group may, if it wishes, form a national district and have its own local soviet. In all there are several thousand "national soviets" of this type in various parts of the U.S.S.R.

When the Russian Republic was first formed, a Constitution or "Fundamental Law" was drawn up laying down the way in which Soviets were elected, the powers and duties of various public bodies and other similar matters. Later the other Soviet Republics modelled themselves on this Constitution. It was adopted in 1918 when the civil war was just beginning; and several features of it reflect the period of acute social struggle from which it arose, at a time when the new Soviet Republic was battling for its existence. In 1936, in the last year but one of the Second Five Year Plan, a new Constitution was drawn up. It was drafted by a special commission under the chairmanship of Stalin: whence it is sometimes referred to as the Stalin Constitution. Certain important changes were introduced as compared with the Constitution of 1918 or with that of the newly-founded Union in 1923.

This 1936 Constitution began by stating that "the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics is a socialist State of workers and peasants" (Article 1). "The economic foundation of the U.S.S.R. consists of a socialist economic system and social ownership of the tools and means of production" (Article 4). "Socialist property takes either the form of

Union, and are in the hands of separate People's Commissariats (corresponding to our Ministries) of the Union (or central) Government. Other things, such as education, social welfare, police (called "militia"), the administration of smaller-scale local industries and what is called municipal economy, are controlled by each separate republic; and there are Commissariats controlling them in the Governments of the republics, but not in the Union Government. There is also a middle group of things like internal trade, agriculture, finance, and the administration of justice and of light industry, which have Commissariats in charge of them both in each republic *and* in the Union Government. Each republic has a considerable say in the running of these things within its own boundaries, but it is at the same time subject to a good deal of control over the general lines of policy from the parallel Commissariat in the central Government. (The Commissariats go by the official name of "unified commissariats" or "union-republic commissariats," to distinguish them from the "non-unified" ones that we mentioned before.)

Originally there were four republics; to-day there are sixteen large Union Republics and another twenty-two smaller "Autonomous Republics," as they are called. Of the larger ones the largest are the Russian and the Ukrainian. Then comes the White, or Byelorussian. What used to be the Transcaucasian Federation has now been split up again into three, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan, with smaller autonomous republics for the highland peoples of the Caucasus, the Ossetes and the people of Daghestan who are so different in race and customs from the peoples of the lowlands to the south. Similarly, in Central-Asia there are now five separate republics: the Turkmen, the Uzbek, the Tajik, the Kazak and the Khirghiz, for each of the different peoples of this region. The latest Union Republics to be formed were those on the western borders of the country in 1940: the Karelo-Finnish, Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian and Moldavian Republics.

Other smaller "Autonomous Republics" are those of

in the early centuries A.D. from the Church of Constantinople. Among the first acts of the Soviet Government was to separate Church and State, to disestablish the Church, — we should say, and to nationalise all church property. Further, religious instruction in schools was ended and religious education of children could only be done in the home. The Church could conduct training of grown-up persons who wished to become priests; but they were not



METROPOLITAN SERGIUS OF MOSCOW,  
Head of the Russian Orthodox Church

allowed to run schools for children. Religious worship, however, was not only allowed, but the right to carry it on was safeguarded by law, and the right to use churches was granted to any religious community, whether Orthodox Church or Baptist or Jewish or Mohammedan, which could show that it had the support of at least twenty people. The right of religious communities to worship as they pleased was reaffirmed in the 1936 Constitution. Evidence that churches and church organisations continue unhindered in U.S.S.R. was afforded when a few days after Hitler's attack on U.S.S.R. we read in the newspapers that 12,000 worshippers in Moscow's cathedral prayed for

State property (the wealth of the people as a whole) or the form of co-operative and collective property (property of separate collective farms, property of co-operative associations)" (Article 5). At the same time it went on to say that "alongside the socialist system of economy, which is the dominant form of economy in U.S.S.R., the law allows small-scale private enterprise of individual peasants and handicraftsmen based on their personal labour, provided there is no exploitation of the labour of others" (Article 9); and that "the right of personal property of citizens in the income from their work and in their savings, in their dwelling-house, household articles and utensils and articles for personal use and comfort, as well as the right of inheritance of personal property of citizens, is protected by law" (Article 10).

In later sections the Constitution proceeded to list certain "basic rights and duties of citizens," beginning with "the right to work," "the right to security in old age" and "the right to education." Among these rights were: "equal rights for citizens of the U.S.S.R., irrespective of their nationality or race" (Article 123); "freedom of conscience and of religious worship" (Article 124); "freedom of speech" and "of assembly and meetings" (Article 125); and "the inviolability of the homes of citizens and secrecy of correspondence are protected by law" (Article 128). Among the "duties of every citizen" are listed: "to carry out the laws, to maintain labour discipline, honestly to perform public duties, to safeguard and strengthen public property, (and to undertake) the defence of the fatherland" (Articles 130-133).

Something more should, perhaps, be said about the clause in the Constitution which refers to "freedom of conscience and of religious worship." The official doctrine of the Communist Party, to which the rulers of U.S.S.R. belong, is anti-religious; whereas in Tsarist days the Russian Orthodox Church had been an officially supported State Church. This was similar to the Catholic Church in other countries, but derived, not from the Church of Rome, but

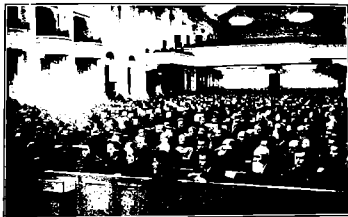
soviets for larger areas like regions and provinces. In each republic a Supreme Soviet is elected for a period of four years. This passes all laws relating to the republic, and elects the Council of People's Commissars (a sort of Cabinet), consisting of the heads of each of the Commissariats or departments (for example, agriculture, finance, health, education, local industry).

For the Union as a whole the supreme law-making body is the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R., which is divided into two chambers. The first of these is called the Soviet of the Union, and is elected by all citizens, who elect deputies to it in electoral districts, or constituencies, on the basis of one deputy for every 300,000 electors. It numbers about 600 deputies, and elections take place every four years. The second chamber is called the Soviet of Nationalities. What is interesting about this is that it affords a means of giving each of the large national republics an equal voice, irrespective of the number of people the republic contains. It has rather more than 570 members, representing about 60 different nationalities. Each Union-Republic appoints 25 members to it and each autonomous republic 11. In addition the autonomous provinces can each appoint 5, and the smaller national regions 1 deputy each. Either Chamber can propose laws; but any law has to have the agreement of both Chambers.

The Supreme Soviet meets less frequently than does



KALININ, WHO HOLDS AN OFFICE  
EQUIVALENT TO PRESIDENT  
OF THE U.S.S.R.



A SESSION OF THE SUPREME SOVIET IN THE KREMLIN.

victory on June 25th, 1941, led by twenty-six priests headed by the Patriarch Sergius; while the heads of the two main branches into which the Russian Church has now divided appealed for the fullest support of the Government by all Christians. There are said to be about 30,000 religious congregations in U.S.S.R., with some 8,000 churches, synagogues and mosques in regular use.

What, then, is the Government of the U.S.S.R., and how is it elected? Each village and each town (and sometimes districts of a town, like our own boroughs) have a soviet (or council) elected every two years by the citizens of that town or village by ballot vote. These have control over local affairs, running small local industries, looking after schools, hospitals or clinics, and the building of houses, the repair of roads and bridges, the administration of justice in the local "people's courts" (similar to our local bench) and the feeding and clothing of children of poor families. In the case of village soviets, they regulate local markets and supervise farms in the locality and woods and forests and the cutting of timber. Similarly there are elected



A POLLING-BOOTH IN MOSCOW ON ELECTION-DAY.

Soviet were made from the lower soviets and not directly by the electors. Also the vote was only allowed to "productive workers" (this including peasant-farmers who worked their own farms); people "who employ others for the sake of profit" or live on income from property being excluded, as were also private traders, priests and former members of the Tsarist police. Since the new Constitution of 1936 voting has been by ballot; deputies to the Supreme Soviet, as well as to the town or village or provincial soviets, are elected directly by the electors; and there is no longer any class of persons excluded from the vote (except criminals and lunatics). The vote is universal to all citizens over eighteen years of age; as the Constitution puts it, election is "on the basis of universal and direct suffrage by secret ballot."

In the year 1937 which followed the new Constitution there was actually only a single "list" of candidates placed before the electors, to which each elector had to vote "yes" or "no." But these lists had been prepared by electoral commissions, following election meetings at which nominations were made and openly discussed before a selection

the British Parliament (less frequently, at least, than the latter does in peace-time), usually being called together for two sessions each year. To carry on business, and to work out the details of laws and the conduct of them, it elects (at joint sessions of both Chambers) what is called a Presidium of 35 members, and also the Council of People's Commissars (or Cabinet). This Council elects a chairman, who is similar to a Prime Minister in other countries. This was M. Molotov (who was also Commissar for Foreign Affairs) until May 1941, when his place as chairman was taken by M. Stalin. M. Molotov was a student at the University of St. Petersburg in the old days, who worked for many years up to 1917 in the capital, working secretly for the Bolshevik Party and at one time taking part in editing its newspaper. Molotov is an adopted name, his real name being Scriabin. M. Stalin's position until recently was simply that of secretary of the Communist Party. This was a very important and influential position; but it was only with the approach of war that he became Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars, or Premier, and after Hitler's attack on Russia he became Chairman of the newly formed State Defence Council, which gave him a position of supreme responsibility for all questions affecting the conduct of the war. M. Kalinin, originally a peasant who came to work in a factory as a worker at the bench, holds an office known as Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Council, which is equivalent to that of President of the U.S.S.R.

Originally voting at elections was by show of hands at open election meetings, where names were proposed and voted upon and "instructions" to the elected delegates were discussed; as, for example, may happen in Britain in a trade-union branch when mandated delegates are being elected to attend an important conference. Once elected the delegate was usually required to report back from time to time, and could be recalled at any time and replaced by someone else. Election to the highest bodies was "indirect," in the sense that elections to the Supreme



are encouraged to write to the papers to make suggestions and voice complaints; and there are special worker- and peasant-correspondents (over a million of them in all, or more than one for every fifty or sixty households), whose job it is to write about what is happening in their factory or village and where need be to voice criticism of the local managers or officials. Practically every factory (or other institution) has what is called a "wall newspaper," edited by workers in the factory and dealing with local news and discussion of factory topics.

But the political duty of a citizen is not thought of as consisting simply in voting at an election or in being able to discuss questions of the hour intelligently. It is regarded as the political duty of every citizen to take a hand in running things, and not to leave them to officials and professional politicians. This stress on *active* democracy is a quality in Soviet political life which we should not ignore. This "taking a hand in things" may be in production-conferences of all the workers in a factory to discuss the programme of work for that factory, or it may be by becoming one of the 5,000,000-odd members of factory committees and insurance committees, which look after trade-union questions, working conditions and similar things in industry, or being one of the many millions of members of collective-farm management committees or of village soviets that run the affairs of the farm and the village.

## Chapter 10

### EDUCATION

IN the old Russia of twenty-five to thirty years ago education was very backward, except for the fortunate few. True, Russia had been one of the first countries to introduce a system of State-run education, as far back as the Empress Catharine the Great, who ruled Russia at the end of the

was made. Far from all the names on the list were members of the Communist Party. Many were non-party, these making up nearly a fifth of the Soviet of the Union and between a quarter and a third of the Soviet of Nationalities; while as many as two-thirds of the members of local soviets (800,000 out of 1,200,000) are non-party people.

The Communist Party has a position that in many respects has no parallel elsewhere. It is itself democratic in structure. Its officials are elected by ballot-vote of the membership; and its members every few years go through what are called "cleansings," or scrutinies of the record and conduct of each member, which are held in public so that ordinary people can attend and voice their opinion on the fitness or unfitness of the members concerned. It is the only organised party that (since the early days of the revolution) exists in the U.S.S.R., and it is given a place in the Constitution where it is described as "the vanguard of the working people . . . which represents the leading nucleus of all organisations of the working people." But it should probably be thought of as a society of people who are entrusted with special responsibilities and special duties in everyday life and intended to set an example and to lead behaviour and opinion, rather than as an ordinary electoral party in a Parliamentary country.

Two things are specially noticeable about the political system of the U.S.S.R. One is the much greater interest shown by the ordinary person in political questions than is usually the case in this country or America; the other is the extent to which ordinary citizens take an active share in political affairs. The newspapers give much more space to serious economic and political information and to political discussion than they do here or in America; and these newspapers are also very widely and seriously read by workers and collective farmers, women as well as men, and young people as well as old. There is relatively little of the lighter "features" side of our newspapers; and none at all of the sensational stuff that is often thought necessary to make our own papers sell. Discussion is keen; people

number has been nearly doubled. Most schools in the large towns have to work two shifts as a result. In the morning from 8 till 12.30 or 1 o'clock one set of classes occupy the building, and in the afternoon from 2 or 2.30 until 7 o'clock another set of classes. In many of the smaller places the school-buildings are still poor and poorly-equipped by our standards. But to-day nearly every village has a school of some kind, and the building of new and well-equipped buildings was going steadily on (till the war interrupted it) as fast as the available supplies of building materials, which were also so much needed for factories and dwelling-houses, would allow.

Everyone living in the same place goes to the same school, and there is coeducation of boys and girls together in the same schools and the same classes from the kindergarten to the university. Where in a town or district there are people who speak a language which is not the language of the republic they are in, they have the right to have their own school and to be taught in their own language. First of all there is what is called Pre-School Education. This is voluntary for those parents who wish to make use of it. It includes the crèche and the kindergarten; sometimes these being provided by the factory for children of its workers, especially where many women workers are employed. Here mothers who work during the day can leave their children to be looked after while they are at work: a fact which has been very important in enabling women to take up jobs as well as men. This Pre-School Education caters for children up to the age of seven or eight. Next comes what is called the Seven Year School for boys and girls between eight and fifteen. This is compulsory; and those joining the school at seven or eight are supposed already to have learned to read and write, either at home or at a kindergarten. It is divided into a junior, or primary, stage (eight to twelve) and a senior stage (twelve to fifteen); and for the last ten years this has been compulsory for all children in cities and industrial centres in the Russian Republic and the Ukrainian Republic; while the four

eighteenth century; and Russia had some famous universities, with many distinguished scholars whose work was known throughout the world. But outside the towns schools were few; and the great majority of workers and peasants had not even sufficient schooling to teach them to read or write. At the time of the Revolution there were schools enough for 8,000,000 boys and girls, or one in every four children; but that was all.

The Soviet Government made it an important point of policy to extend education rapidly; and one of its first decrees announced that education was to be universal and free. Little could be done during the years of civil war and destruction. But as soon as the civil war was over, a bold start was made with building schools, both in the towns and the villages. Classes were set up to teach grown-up people who could not read or write. Steps were taken to enable ordinary workers and peasants to find a place in the higher schools and universities. But not only did schools have to be built, which was a difficult and slow process in a poor country, but more teachers had to be trained to give the lessons in the schools, more books had to be written and printed and more equipment of all kinds for schools had to be turned out. The spread of education was not something that could be completed overnight. In trying to improve teaching methods many experiments were made, some of them failures, some successful; mistakes were frequent, and later changes had to be introduced in the light of these mistakes.

But over a period of twenty-five years very big changes occurred in education, both in its amount and in its quality. The number of children in elementary schools, and also the number of teachers, have been increased four times, and the number in secondary schools by more than ten times. Grown-up people who cannot read or write have been reduced in number from nearly four in every five to only one in every five throughout the whole country, remote Asiatic parts included. There are still too few school-buildings to meet the need for them, even though their

years of primary education have been compulsory for everyone, whether in village or town, in these two republics.

In addition to this Seven Year School, there are also Ten Year Schools, which carry pupils through from the age of seven or eight to seventeen or eighteen. It is the intention to make these universal as soon as it is possible. But at present there are not sufficient of these to make attendance at the Ten Year School universal and compulsory except in the Ukraine and in Leningrad: that is still a thing for the future. For the present, only those who attain a standard of "good" at the end of the Seven Year School are able to proceed to a further three years of secondary education up to seventeen or eighteen. But more than half of all school-children in a town like Moscow manage to go right through with the Ten Year School until seventeen—a very much higher proportion than in our own country.

Boys and girls leaving school at fifteen can then proceed to what is called a *technicum* (or technical school) or to a factory apprentice-school. The first of these gives a three- or four-year course of training for some profession (for example as an elementary-school teacher or a foreman or departmental manager in industry). Here practical work is combined with classes in general science and economics and the learning of a foreign language. The student who passes his examination at the end of it is granted a diploma. The factory apprentice-schools involve a much shorter course of six to twelve months, and provide training as a skilled worker in a factory or a mine or in some branch of the transport service or radio or telephone.

Just before the war, with the need for a great many more trained workers and foremen in the war industries, two new types of school were started, one of them called Trade Schools for those aged fifteen for two years and the other called Railway and Vocational Schools for those aged sixteen or seventeen for six months. Attendance at these was to be compulsory for those selected to go to them; and those who passed out of them were supposed to stay in the jobs to which they were posted for at least four years.



# KINDERGARTEN AND PRIMARY SCHOOL.

Top : playroom of a nursery school attached to a Leningrad factory. Bottom : coming out of school, in Moscow.

This was to take the place of military service; and pupils were to be fed and boarded free while they were at these schools.

Finally there is the university stage, to which anyone can go who has completed ten years of school and has either passed out well in the final examination at school or passed the special entrance examination for the university. On the eve of the war there were more than six times as many university students as there had been twenty-five years before.

University students are usually housed in special hostels, where they have their board and keep supplied for them by the State. But nowadays, to get these advantages and to attend a university free and without fees, it is necessary to have attained a certain fairly high standard in the preliminary examinations. There are a few universities in the U.S.S.R. that combine in one a variety of different faculties, as most universities do in this country: for example, the Moscow State University. But mostly they are more specialised bodies, called Institutes, which are really single-faculty universities, connected with some profession or industry, as for example an institute for training teachers or an engineering institute, or an agricultural or a railway transport institute. The object of these institutes is to train high-grade engineers and technicians or industrial managers, or else teachers and research workers in various branches of science and learning. It can be said that the opportunity to-day exists in U.S.S.R. for almost any boy or girl of talent to get a university education, whatever the occupation or the income of his or her parents, whether farmer or labourer or miner or engineer or teacher, doctor or scientist; whether Russian or Tartar or Uzbek or Mongolian. Nearly four-fifths of all students in Soviet universities or university-institutes are from the families of workers or peasants.

An important place is given in all teaching to a knowledge of science, and also to a knowledge of the economics and politics of the country (here we should probably call it



ZOOLOGY CLASS IN A MOSCOW SCHOOL.



UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN A CHEMICAL LABORATORY.





ICE-HOCKEY AT THE MOSCOW PALACE OF YOUNG PIONEERS  
(SEEN IN BACKGROUND).

makes and what its products are used for. They have a saying: "Theory and practice are one." But this unity of theory and practice works both ways. Every attempt is made to link brain-work with hand-work and to link school-studies with practical work in making and changing things. At the same time in factory schools and technical schools students are not only taught to be clever with their hands: they are taught to use their brains as well and are expected to learn something about the theory of the machine and the materials with which they work and something of the science and the economics of the industry to which they belong. At various times a number of novel educational methods have been experimented with in Soviet schools (the Dalton Plan, so-called Polytechnisation, etc.). But in recent years these have been for the most part abandoned; and a return made to more "normal" methods in the classroom; although the more important lessons acquired from these experiments have left a firm imprint on teaching methods.

For the Soviet boy and girl learning does not begin or



A LECTURE TO MEDICAL STUDENTS.

" civics " or " current affairs " ). But mathematics and Russian literature are also subjects of all school teaching, and the learning of a foreign language, such as English or German, begins about the fourth year at school. Art and music are also taught; and there are generally special art and music circles outside the normal school hours for those who want to join them. In the Ten Year School there is history, higher mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, art and music, and also some technology and military subjects.

The Soviet school year is about thirty-eight or forty weeks, and stretches from September to early June, broken only by short intervals in December and March, with a long holiday in the summer covering most of June, July and August, like universities in our own country. Studies in the classroom are linked with practical studies, not only through excursions to museums and the use of films and models and practical science, but through having a certain number of hours of work with machines in a nearby factory, and learning about the factory and how it works, what it

- THE THEATRE, CINEMA, MUSIC AND -  
- " " " BOOKS " " "

Theatres to-day are more numerous and have a more vigorous life than they did in the old Russia. In former days they were attended chiefly by a small circle of well-to-do people in the larger towns. The vast majority of the people had never been inside one. To-day there are five or six times as many theatres as formerly. In Moscow alone, which had no more than seven or eight before, there are now forty. Special theatres in forty different languages exist to cater for people of the various national minorities—Jewish theatres, Georgian, Tartar, Mongolian. The opera and ballet in Leningrad and Moscow and Kiev and the world-famous Moscow Art Theatre maintain a standard of performance which excels that of other cities of Europe; and these performances are no longer the interest of a small circle, but have become popular in the best sense of the word. Here the boxes or rows of seats in the stalls will be reserved for workers of a particular factory; and you can often see outside the door of a box in one of the large theatres a little metal plate saying that it belongs to the workers of such-and-such a factory or trade-union. In summer companies from the opera and the best-known theatres of Moscow and Leningrad will tour the smaller

end with the school-building. There are leisure-time activities too; and they expect to learn about the world when they are enjoying themselves outside school-hours as well as in the classroom. Physical culture and sport are encouraged. There are special children's cinemas and also children's theatres (in Moscow, for example, eight of them) where the acting is done by boys and girls, and boys and girls assist also in the stage-managing and the painting of scenery. There are the Pioneers and the Komsomol (short for Young Communist League), which are not altogether unlike our Wolf Cubs and Scouts. There are Pioneer summer camps in the country or in the warm south round the deep blue waters of the Black Sea. In the larger cities like Moscow and Leningrad and Kiev and Kharkov there are very fine Pioneer Palaces—often former palaces or mansions converted into clubs for a thousand or more boys and girls. Here there are dancing classes and rooms for gym. and chess and other games; studios for painting and sculpture; a history room where are costumes, pictures and maps of the past; workshops for making films or model aeroplanes; and a short-wave radio station by which messages can be sent to the Pioneer Palaces of other towns. In some of the parks there are model railways, and at places by the sea there are children's ports with their own boats and ships. Books for boys and girls are printed in tens of millions each; and there are special State Publishing Houses for publishing nothing but children's books. Russian school children read, not only stories by Russian writers like Tolstoy, Gorky and Chekhov; they are fond too of Grimm's Fairy Tales and *Uncle Remus*, of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *Tom Sawyer*, of Jack London and Jules Verne and Dickens and Sir Walter Scott.

towns or collective farms or the workers' clubs of outlying industrial centres. To-day in war-time they visit army units at the front or ships of the Fleet. Factories and collective-farm villages have their dramatic clubs and circles; and leading theatres will assume "patronage," as it is called, over these, giving them advice and assistance, and sometimes sending actors to visit them and take part in their performances. In some cities the trade-unions have their own theatres, just as the Red Army also has its theatres and its orchestras.

Besides the better-known theatres, like the Moscow Art Theatre, there are other celebrated ones, each with a tradition and a style of acting and production peculiar to itself. For example, there are the Leningrad Dramatic Theatre; in Moscow the Little Theatre, the Kamerny and the Vakhtangov Theatres, the Theatre of the Revolution, and the Stanislavsky and Nemirovitch-Danchenko Musical Theatres (called after the two famous men who built up the Moscow Art Theatre, and since the war amalgamated into one theatre). An important difference from this country is that each theatre generally has its own school attached to it, where actors are trained; and this is largely responsible for the distinctive "styles" of the various theatres, as well as for maintaining their high standard of workmanship. The most important of them are national theatres—owned and financed by the Commissariat of Education. But each has a large measure of self-government in choosing its methods and its personnel and its *repertoire*.

Many of the plays are by present-day Russian writers and deal with the various aspects and problems of modern Soviet life, just as in the years which followed the revolution and civil war many of the plays dealt with incidents of the revolution. A common theme running through them is the new Soviet man and woman, released from bondage into freedom and a new life, joyous in the boundless possibilities of that new life, while at the same time soberly working and studying to master the numerous problems to be



SCENE FROM A PLAY ABOUT THE CIVIL WAR AT THE LITTLE  
THEATRE IN MOSCOW



A SCENE FROM SHAKESPEARE'S *TWELFTH NIGHT* AT THE  
SECOND MOSCOW ART THEATRE.

were mostly historical films about the revolution; and two of the film producers best known in this country were Eisenstein, who made *Armoured Cruiser*, *Potemkin* and *October*, and Pudovkin, who is famous for his classic films, *Mother*, about the 1905 revolution (based on the novel by Gorky of the same name), and *The End of St. Petersburg*, which was made, like *October*, to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the Soviet revolution of 1917. Pudovkin also made a very interesting and pictorially beautiful film about Mongolia called *Storm over Asia*. Among other great names of the Soviet cinema at this time were Dovjenko, who made *Arsenal*, a film about the revolution in the Ukraine which created something of a sensation in American and English film circles when it appeared, and *Earth*, full of lyrical beauty about the problems of village life in the Ukraine; also Ermler, who made *Stump of an Empire*, and Vertov, who made the poetic *Three Songs of Lenin*.

These early films mostly dealt with crowd-scenes and people in the mass on great historical occasions, not with individual heroes and heroines. In some cases actors were not used at all, but ordinary people being themselves in front of the camera as workers or peasants or soldiers. Most of them were photographed out-of-doors, in the streets or in the fields, instead of inside a studio; some of them on the actual spots where the historical event with which they dealt had actually occurred: for example, the



FILM-DIRECTOR DOVJENKO  
WHO PRODUCED *ARSENAL*  
AND *EARTH*.

faced in building a new socialist world. But the classics, both of old-time Russian writers and of writers of other countries, are also very popular. People like them because they feel that from these classic works they are drinking of the great heritage of human culture on which the new generation have entered and which they are striving to make their own. Shakespeare's plays, for example, are performed in Moscow possibly more often than they are in London. Also performed are the comedies of Molière, of Goldoni, of Calderon, of our own Ben Jonson and Sheridan; plays of Aristophanes and Æschylus of ancient Greece, of Cervantes, Schiller, Goethe and Victor Hugo, or of modern playwrights like Eugène O'Neill and Sean O'Casey and Bernard Shaw. In the winter of 1941-2, while the war was raging up to the gates of Moscow and Leningrad, Oliver Goldsmith's play *She Stoops to Conquer* was being played to enthusiastic audiences in the new war-time capital of Kuibyshev on the Volga, while the Georgian Rustavelli Theatre at Tiflis was producing *Hamlet*.

In music, whether at the opera or in the concert-hall, the classic Russian composers like Moussorgsky, Rimsky-Korsakov, Borodin and especially Tchaikovsky rank in popularity with Bach and Beethoven. At the same time there are several present-day Soviet composers, such as Prokofiev, who has recently written a Suite called 1941 and an Opera based on Tolstoi's great novel *War and Peace*, and the young composer Shostakovitch, who from besieged Leningrad wrote his *Victory Symphony* in honour of that heroic city.

Russian films have won for themselves a well-earned reputation in other countries among those who study films, even though they have not been shown in the commercial cinemas of this country and America even as widely as have some French and German films in the past. Consequently their qualities are known only to the few and are unknown to the majority. In the old silent film days there is no doubt that their best films were artistically far in advance of anything in Hollywood or Elstree. These



the problems of the individual, especially of the men and women of a new type who had grown up amid the new conditions of Soviet life. Later films dealt with historical figures in Russia's past, showing them as live flesh-and-blood persons who had contributed in their own way and in their own time to the progress of the Russian people. These films paid attention to reproducing both the atmosphere and the detail of the period, with a care and truthfulness that Hollywood, with its lavish costume-displays, scarcely ever achieves and seldom attempts. Towards the later part of the 1930's a number of Soviet films of outstanding excellence began to receive applause both inside and outside U.S.S.R. Three of the most notable of these recent films about historical figures have been *Peter the Great*, Eisenstein's *Alexander Nevsky* (which won a Stalin Prize) and Pudovkin's *General Suvorov*.

But humour and music are not neglected in the Soviet cinema. An early humorous film that in parts was quite as funny as any Marx Brothers was called *Jazz Comedy*. This included, incidentally, some very good popular tunes, and was directed by Alexandrov, who previously had worked with Eisenstein. Recently English cinemas (though only a few of them) have been showing some first-class Soviet musical comedies, like *The Rich Bride*, a film rich in humour, characterisation and rhythm, about harvest-time on a collective farm in the south, with some very good songs by Dunayevsky; *Musical Story*, about a Leningrad taxi-driver who becomes an opera singer; and *The Bright Path*, a modern Cinderella-story about a peasant-girl who becomes a Stakhanovite weaver and a famous person. The Soviet film-studios have also turned out many educational films: for example, films about science and a notable film for children based on Swift's story of Gulliver, called *New Gulliver*, by Ptushko, which was made with a child-actor together with puppets. Since the war Soviet cameramen have put on uniform and have gone with the Red Army right into the front-line to photograph the battle itself, many of them being killed in doing so.



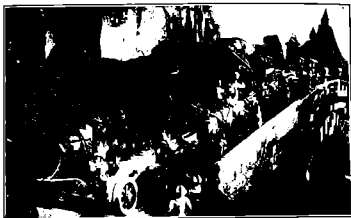
OLD PEASANT TYPES FROM EISENSTEIN'S FILM, *GENERAL LINE*.

scenes of the taking of the Winter Palace by Red Guards in Eisenstein's *October* or the steps on the water-front of Odessa in his *Potemkin*. Later they dealt with some of the problems of the Five Year Plan, like *Turksib* (by Turin) about the building of the thousand-mile-long Turkestan-Siberian railway, and Eisenstein's *General Line* about the difficulties of forming collective farms.

Then came the sound-film; and although the Soviet technicians were not long in turning-out their own sound-film equipment, the change-over involved important alterations in the type of film made; and for some time the Soviet film industry seemed less successful in mastering the new medium. At any rate, for some years there was little or nothing to compare with the masterpieces of the Soviet silent film. However, there were a few films (like *Chapayev* about the civil war guerrilla-leader and *The Thirteen* and *We from Kronstadt*) that were full of interest in their portrayal of human character or in their use of dialogue. There now came to be a shift of emphasis away from mass scenes and great historic occasions to the study of character and

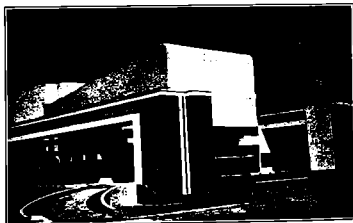
Out of these real battle-scenes that have been photographed on the spot several important films have been made which will stand for the future as historical records of great events. One of these celebrated the first great defeat that Hitler suffered on land: *The Defeat of the Germans near Moscow*. In it you see, not only troops and guns moving up to the great counter-attack, and recaptured villages after the attack, but a tank-battle photographed through the slits of a tank in action. On June 13th, 1942, a hundred and sixty cameramen went into the battle on various parts of the eastern front, and as a result created another epic document of the war: *One Day of War*.

As regards books, there is probably more publishing activity in U.S.S.R. than in any other country of the world. Not only is the number of titles published each year a large one (50,000 each year is quite common), but the editions that are printed of each book are surprisingly large. Mr. Joseph Davies, who was American Ambassador in Moscow for some time, has pointed out that in a peace-time year seven times as many copies of books were sold as in Tsarist times. Editions of serious literature run into tens of thousands, even sometimes hundreds of thousands; and the number of copies of books of all kinds printed each year runs to more than 500,000,000. Some of these are books about politics. Many of them are school and college textbooks and instructional booklets about science and technology for factory workers. But the works of the great writers of the past are also in very great demand. Of Russian writers, Pushkin, Gogol, Tolstoy, Gorky are specially popular; also European classics like Dante, Balzac and Goethe; English writers from Chaucer to Fielding and Dickens. In 1939 special celebrations of the 375th anniversary of Shakespeare's birth were held and in 1940 of the 540th anniversary of Chaucer's death. The first Russian translation of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* has appeared in Moscow during the war. Between 1928 and 1930 three editions of Dickens's *Oliver Twist* appeared, each edition of 30,000 copies, and two editions in each case



A SCENE FROM THE FILM *THE LILLIPUTIANS* MADE  
IN 1944 AND DIRECTED BY TUSHKO

*The Lilliputians take the captive Gulliver into their city*



THE NEW THEATRE AT ROSTOV-ON-DON, NAMED AFTER MAXIM  
GORKY.

able in English); also writers like Fadeyev, Fedin, Leonov, Tikhonov and, less widely read, Olesha, Pilnyak and Babel.

In recent years violent experiments in form and style have gone out of favour, and revolutionary themes, splashed on to a large canvas, have given way to what is called "socialist realism"—a concentration, whether in prose or poetry, on depicting life as it was and as it is, in all its richness of detail and variety.

## Chapter 12

### - THE U.S.S.R. AND OTHER COUNTRIES -

THE years of civil war and foreign intervention when the armies of as many as fourteen countries were fighting on her own soil burned deep into the memory of the Russian people. They always feared, even expected, that these attacks would be repeated. Like France in 1789, Russia in 1917 had overthrown an old régime, had brought a new social class into power and had started to create a new kind of social and economic system. Like France 120 years before, she earned the hostility in other countries of all those who disliked the ideas she stood for and disliked the kind of social system she was starting to build. Many people spoke about the danger of leaving alive "the plague-spot of Bolshevism" in Europe, from which Communism might spread to other countries, and they wanted at least to build a wall, as it were, round the U.S.S.R., isolating her from too much contact with the rest of the world.

The U.S.S.R. on her side, fearing the day when the events of 1919 and 1920 might be repeated, hoped and schemed so that this might not happen: at any rate, so that an attack on her would not come at a time when all the larger Powers were united in league against her. Her policy was to break through her isolation, and to seek alliance and friendship with whatever country showed a willingness

of *Nicholas Nickleby*, *David Copperfield* and *The Old Curiosity Shop*. Later 75,000 copies were sold of an abridged edition of *A Tale of Two Cities*; *Pickwick Papers* ran into six editions; and the Children's Publishing House issued 75,000 copies of *Dombey and Son*. When recently a new edition of Dickens's collected works appeared, application was received for 20,000 sets within two days.

Of modern English and American writers, Steinbeck (author of *Grapes of Wrath* and *Mice and Men*), Dreiser, Hemingway, Galsworthy and Wells are well-known. In Moscow there is a special State Public Library of Foreign Literature. The librarian of this has announced a great demand recently for books by Priestley, Cronin, Somerset Maugham and Arnold Bennett; and in 1941 and 1942 special exhibitions were staged in this library in honour of the birthdays of Bernard Shaw and Wells and Arnold Bennett.

Of the younger Soviet writers it is difficult to speak shortly; and they must be read if they are to be understood. Of poets the most popular was formerly Mayakovsky, the futurist in style who spoke in the language of the street and the factory about the revolution and its achievements. Mayakovsky "wished his pen to become a sword." One of his poems was called *The Cloud in Trousers*, another *Hands off China* and another was about Lenin. More traditional in form and more remote from current politics was Pasternak, who wrote such lines as:

"Weave this shower like waves of cold elbows  
Like lilies, satin and strong with powerless palms."

Of novelists the best known in England is Sholokhov, who has written a massive trilogy of novels about Cossack life on the Don during and since the revolution. Among other outstanding figures is Alexey Tolstoy, who is best known as a writer of historical novels, and Ilya Ehrenburg, who was recently awarded a Stalin Prize for a novel about modern France called *The Fall of Paris* (which is now avail-

But as soon as Hitler came to power in Germany, the U.S.S.R. realised that the position had quickly grown much more dangerous. Hitler made no secret of his ambition to expand eastward, first against Czechoslovakia and eventually into the Soviet Ukraine; and he proceeded to play the game of angling for the friendship (or at least neutrality) of France and Britain on condition that he satisfied his lust by grabbing territory to the east and did not threaten Britain and France and their colonies. At the same time Japan had started on a bandit's career of aggression in Manchuria and north China. The U.S.S.R. began to fear an attack on two fronts, both east and west, at the same time. Soon Germany and Japan, as fellow-bandits, joined hands, and together with Italy formed what was called the Anti-Comintern Pact directed against U.S.S.R. The U.S.S.R. realised that it was now a race against time until she could build up a modern armament industry and equip her army and air force with enough up-to-date tanks and aeroplanes and guns to stand up to the weight of the Axis forces. In the meantime she must gain time to complete her preparations. There was also still hope that war might be prevented, and peace maintained, by the combined action of peace-loving nations to restrain Hitlerite aggression.

In 1934 the Soviet Government had made one further attempt to come to some sort of agreement with Germany to keep the peace. In 1932 Litvinov, the Soviet Foreign Minister, had supported proposals for all-round disarmament at the Disarmament Conference at Geneva; and about this time he had concluded a series of "Non-Aggression Pacts" with some ten countries, mostly countries which were neighbours of the U.S.S.R. Now the Soviet Government made two offers of neutrality agreements with Germany. The first was to be a joint guarantee of the independence of the Baltic States (in March 1934). The second was a proposal for a general eastern European regional pact of mutual guarantee (in July). Germany rejected both.

In September 1934 the U.S.S.R. proceeded to join the League of Nations (which Germany and Japan had recently

to be friendly. In fact, ever since 1920, when foreign Governments called off their troops from Soviet soil, the Soviet Government has been willing to enter into close diplomatic agreements or to make trade agreements with any other country, however different the political views of its Government or its social and economic system might be. At the same time, the Soviet Government always tried to be specially close friends of any country that was ready to be friendly, in order that these bonds of friendship should be a counter-weight to those Governments who at the time were hostile and whose actions she most feared.

Throughout most of the 1920's the two countries whose hostility Russia chiefly feared were Britain and France; and she stayed outside the League of Nations because she regarded the League as being dominated by Britain and France and an instrument of their policies. All the same, she made trade agreements with these countries, to buy goods from them and to sell wheat and timber and oil and furs in their markets, and she exchanged Ambassadors with them. But at this time it was with Germany and with Turkey that she was most closely connected, signing the Treaty of Rapallo with Germany in 1922 and a Treaty of Friendship and Neutrality with Turkey in 1925. We have to remember that Germany at this time was a democratic republic, and Turkey had a new and progressive national Government headed by Mustapha Kemal Pasha, who was trying to modernise his country and make it more independent of foreign capital than it had been before. In the East, in 1924, the U.S.S.R. (which had renounced the special privileges that Russia had formerly enjoyed in China) resumed diplomatic relations with China, and adopted a policy of friendliness to China as an offset to the power of Japan, who still cast greedy eyes on Vladivostok and eastern Siberia. In the years that were to come the U.S.S.R. was to extend, not only a hand of friendship, but also a good deal of practical assistance to the growing nationalist movement in China, which was striving to make China a united and an independent country.



and U.S.S.R. were bound under treaties to come to the help of Czechoslovakia if she were attacked. It was at this fatal hour that Mr. Chamberlain, then Prime Minister of Britain, flew to Godesberg to talk to Hitler and discuss whether a compromise could be found. A few days later he flew again to meet Hitler, this time in the company of the French Prime Minister, M. Daladier, and to Berchtesgaden, Hitler's summer resort near Munich. Here was signed an agreement under which the territory that Hitler was asking for was ceded to him, and the Czechs were bluntly told that if they did not accept the agreement they would receive no support from London or Paris.

In these discussions Moscow was almost completely ignored; and the Soviet Government did not forget what they regarded as a snub as well as a breach of faith on the part of Britain and France. Their feelings were not smoothed by the fact that the French Foreign Office, headed by the notorious pro-Nazi Foreign Minister M. Bonnet, even put about stories that it was the Soviet Government that was preparing to let Czechoslovakia down and that the U.S.S.R. did not intend to fulfil her treaty obligations. Actually Russian preparations to go to the military assistance of the Czechs were already at a fairly advanced stage.

The German troops marched without opposition into the territory ceded to them under the Munich agreement. "Peace was saved." But, not satisfied with his bloodless success, Hitler six months later marched into Prague, the capital, and annexed the whole of the rest of Czechoslovakia as well. It was clear that Munich had not appeased but had only whetted his appetite. This was in March 1939.

Several months of negotiation between London, Paris and Moscow followed. Mr. Chamberlain, on behalf of Britain, guaranteed the frontiers of Poland against attack. The U.S.S.R. asked for a similar guarantee of the frontiers of the Baltic States (Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia), since she feared that a German occupation of these countries would be used as a jumping-off ground for an attack on herself.



LITVINOV (LEFT) AND MOLOTOV (RIGHT).

Mr. Litvinov was for many years Commissar for Foreign Affairs, and is now Soviet Ambassador to the United States. Mr. Molotov succeeded him as Commissar for Foreign Affairs in 1939.

left); and in May 1935 she made Treaties of Mutual Assistance first with France and then with Czechoslovakia. Under these treaties each country was to come to the assistance of the other if she was attacked. The intention was that these security-treaties should be open for any other country to sign that wished to; and that they should operate within the framework of the Covenant of the League of Nations, according to which common action was to be taken against any aggressor. The U.S.S.R. at the time hoped that the British Government as well as other Governments would join this system of treaties in what was called a Peace Front to stop Hitlerite aggression.

Having marched his troops into Austria in the early part of 1938, Hitler started sabre-rattling against Czechoslovakia in September, threatening to occupy districts of that country which he declared belonged to Germany by rights. It looked as though war would come if Hitler persisted in his claims to carve up Czechoslovakia, since France



STALIN (RIGHT) WITH MARSHAL VOROSHILOV.

Marshal Voroshilov was an old colleague of Stalin in civil war days and is now a member of the supreme State Defence Council.

for an attack on U.S.S.R. as well as for occupying at any rate Lithuania and Latvia at an early date.

When Poland collapsed in September 1939, and there was danger of the country being completely overrun by Germany, Soviet troops proceeded to occupy the eastern part of Poland up to the river Bug and the river San. In October and November the U.S.S.R. made Pacts of Mutual Assistance with Esthonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Arrangements were made for Soviet garrisons to occupy certain naval bases on the coast at the mouth of the gulf which forms the approach to Leningrad and to the Soviet naval base of Kronstadt. In the following summer, after new elections had taken place in these countries, the three republics joined the U.S.S.R. As regards Finland, the U.S.S.R. in the winter of 1939-40 presented proposals for a revision of the frontier north of Leningrad and for the lease of the promontory of Hango as a naval base at the end of the gulf joining Leningrad to the Baltic Sea. Finland

It is also believed that she wanted unity of command between the nations allied against Hitler and the right to send the Red Army forward on to Polish soil if Germany attacked. These conditions were not granted, and the negotiations dragged on through the summer. Before she became involved in war, the Soviet Government wanted to be sure of full reciprocity of action. Stalin had said in March that the Soviet Government was not going to be in the position of simply "pulling other people's chestnuts out of the fire."

The events which followed have been matters of much controversy, and we cannot go over the details of this here. It is clear, however, that, rightly or wrongly, the Soviet Government doubted whether the British Government at that time sincerely wanted a close alliance with U.S.S.R.; and in fairness one must add that the doubt was not exclusive to Moscow. Finally in August, when the Germans for their own purposes offered a Non-Aggression Pact with Moscow, the Soviet Government accepted it, and the much-discussed German-Soviet Pact of Non-Aggression was signed. The U.S.S.R. had bought a further breathing-space within which to complete her building of a modern armament industry and to equip her army and air force against attack.

The growing danger of war increased the concern in the U.S.S.R. about the defence of her western frontier. This frontier was flanked by the small, rather weak republics of Esthonia, Latvia and Lithuania, where German intrigue was busy; and these could very easily have become the springboard for German attack against U.S.S.R. There was even more concern in U.S.S.R. over the frontier of Finland. This was only twenty miles distant from Leningrad—within shelling distance from long-range guns; and the Finnish High Command had built a powerful fortified line called the Mannerheim Line, which could only have been built with a war against U.S.S.R. in view. The High Command of the Finnish Army had close connections with Germany; and it has now become apparent that Germany had plans for sending troops into Finland

that day when Hitler launched the greatest series of battles in all history, Mr. Churchill made the famous broadcast in which he said: "Any man or State that fights against Nazism will have our aid. . . . We shall give whatever help we can to Russia and the Russian people. . . . Hitler's invasion of Russia is no more than a prelude to an attempted invasion of this island." A few weeks later the Treaty of Alliance between this country and the U.S.S.R. was signed. In a broadcast on July 3rd, 1941, Stalin said: "Our war for the freedom of our country will merge with the struggle of the peoples of Europe and America for their independence, for their democratic liberties. It will be a united front of the peoples standing for freedom against enslavement by Hitler's armies."

## Chapter 13

### - - THE ARMED FORCES - -

THERE was little information available about the Red Army, Navy and Air Force before the war; and it is now evident that the majority of military experts in this country in the summer of 1941 were badly misinformed about its quality. Certainly few people in England at the time thought that the Red Army would be capable of standing up alone against the full weight of the German Army, together with Hitler's satellite armies of Italians, Finns, Hungarians, Roumanians, Slovaks, in the magnificent way that it did for the first eighteen months of terrible and bitter fighting, and then launching counter-offensives to drive them back again.

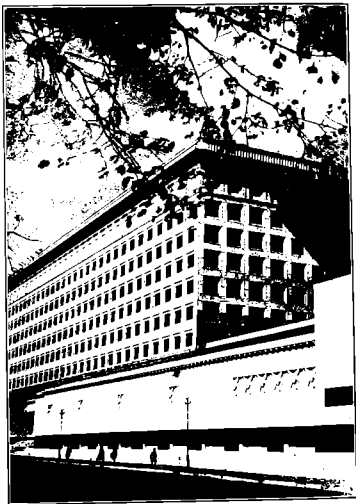
Exact details about the Soviet forces are unobtainable. At the outbreak of the war the Red Army was believed to consist of between 140 and 160 divisions. This army was excellently equipped with the latest types of weapon:

rejected these proposals; and it now seems fairly clear that foreign influence had an important part in causing the Finnish Government to reject them. As a result the U.S.S.R. declared war: a war which continued for three months. By this time Soviet troops had broken through the Mannerheim Line and occupied Viborg. In March 1940 the war was ended by a Peace Treaty, which left Finland as an independent State, but provided for a revision of the frontier north of Leningrad to meet the Soviet desire for greater security in the approaches to Leningrad.

Many people at the time imagined that the Soviet-German Agreement represented a more or less permanent alliance between the two Governments. At the time of the Finnish war help was sent from London and Paris to the Finns, and there were many people both in London and Paris who thought we ought to go to war with U.S.S.R. But when, in the autumn of 1940, Hitler tried to extend the agreement, the Soviet Government refused; and when Germany started her descent into the Balkans in the early part of 1941, the U.S.S.R. openly showed its disapproval, and in April made a Friendship Pact with the new Government of Yugoslavia, which had been set up to resist Germany. Meanwhile, to secure her eastern frontier from attack, the Soviet Government made a Pact of Neutrality with Japan, while at the same time (despite Japanese pressure to stop it) continuing the support she was giving to China in the shape of military supplies.

Finally, in the small hours of June 22nd, 1941, without warning and without a formal declaration of war, Hitler launched his attack on a thousand-mile front across the frontiers of U.S.S.R. Some weeks before, Hess, Hitler's deputy, had flown by air to this country on his sensational mission. As has since been admitted in statements from German sources, he carried proposals that this country should make peace with Germany and co-operate with her in what he chose to call "a Crusade against Communism," to smash the U.S.S.R., eliminate her from Europe and enslave or annihilate her people. But on the evening of

automatic rifles, machine-guns, anti-tank rifles and mortars. It was a heavily mechanised army, and possessed some of the most modern and heavily-armed and armoured tanks of any country, some of them giants of more than 50 tons. As far back as 1935 the Chief of the French Military Mission, who was present at the manoeuvres near Kiev, gave his opinion that in tanks the Red Army took first place in the world. In the same year the leading German tank expert, General Guderian, said that "10,000 tanks, 150,000 military tractors and over 100,000 military motor vehicles of various kinds put the Red Army at the head of Europe in the question of motorisation." Russian artillery had maintained a high standard of excellence, and has proved to be manned with crews of first-rate competence. In 1936 it had an anti-aircraft gun with the longest range of any known anti-aircraft gun in Europe, the Swedish Bofors gun not excepted. Her officers had been very fully trained in the most up-to-date theory and practice of modern warfare in special military schools; and some of them, like Marshal Timoshenko, had studied in higher German military academies in pre-Hitler days. Many officers were veterans of the civil war of 1918-20. Some had been attached to the army of the Republican Government in Spain in 1936-8 during the Spanish anti-Fascist war. They had learned the latest lessons of modern arms and modern warfare. They had studied carefully the experience of war in Spain, in Finland, in frontier fighting with Japan in Mongolia and from the German campaigns of 1940; and they had worked out new strategy and tactics of their own as an answer to the German *blitzkrieg*. After the Munich Agreement in 1938, when Hitler's attack in the east seemed only a question of time, the amount that the U.S.S.R. spent each year on her defence programme, building tank and aeroplane factories and improving the equipment of the Red Army, was very rapidly increased. In aircraft the U.S.S.R. was in many respects a pioneer. She was the first to transport troops and their equipment by air and to use parachute troops on a large scale. She



THE FRUNZE MILITARY ACADEMY, IN MOSCOW.  
The highest military school of the Red Army.



reconnaissance, for transport and as artillery, the Red Air Force has from time to time used long-range bombers to carry out raids on the enemy's rear, including raids on Berlin from bases a thousand miles distant.

The Soviet Navy has also played an important part in the present war, both in the defence of Leningrad in the north and in the Black Sea, where it has been able to make impossible any German sea-borne attack against the Caucasus region. In the early days of the war it dealt an effective blow against German preparations by bombarding the Roumanian port of Constanza on the Black Sea. In the far north in the Barents Sea and off Murmansk and the coast of Norway submarines and smaller craft have done a great deal to harass German attempts to close the lanes along which British and American convoys carry supplies to the ports of Murmansk and Archangel. It was a Soviet submarine which in 1942 torpedoed and damaged the German battleship *Tirpitz* off the coast of Norway, when it was steaming north presumably with the intention of intercepting one of our convoys.

The Soviet Navy is comparatively weak in battleships and heavy cruisers, of which it is believed to have about eight or ten. These include the modernised battleships *Marat* and *Paris Commune*, and also four recently built 8,000-ton cruisers armed with 7-inch guns. But the Navy is fairly strong in submarines, of which it probably has between 100 and 200. These include large vessels of the "submarine-cruiser" type and also of the "midget" type, boats of 200 tons which have a speed of about 10 or 12 knots and carry machine-guns and two 18-inch torpedoes. In addition there are probably about 40 destroyers and minelayers, as well as a fleet of 30- to 60-ton motor speed-boats for submarine-chasing. Just before the war a large shipbuilding programme had been launched, which included the building of a number of modern cruisers and battleships, some of which were still on the stocks when Hitler attacked. In addition to the Baltic Fleet and the Black Sea Fleet and the Northern Fleet,

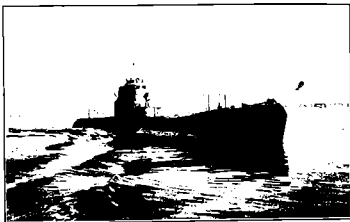


MARSHAL TIMOSHENKO (LEFT), AND A YOUNG SOVIET TANK COMMANDER (LIEUTENANT PIROZHKOV) (RIGHT).

was a pioneer in peace-time stratosphere flying as well as in arctic flying. A number of her planes were used in Spain on the side of the Spanish Government and showed a good record against Italian and German planes fighting on the other side. Some of the machines built by the Soviet aeroplane industry were developments of American types. But the latest types have been the work of Soviet designers; and in the summer of 1941 a number of these newest types were just coming into production. Best known of these is the famous *Stormovik* dive-bomber, which began to appear soon after the outbreak of the Soviet-German war. Its inventor was Ilyushkin; it is thickly armoured and equipped with unusually powerful cannon for anti-tank attack; and, unlike some German dive-bombers, is fast and manœuvrable. Machines of this and similar types are said to have done great execution among German *panzer* divisions during their advance on Moscow in November 1941. In addition to the use of planes in close co-operation with the armed forces on the ground for

Government. I swear to defend her with courage, with skill, with dignity and with honour, sparing neither my blood nor my life to achieve victory over the enemy."

Throughout the armed forces of the U.S.S.R. a great deal of attention is paid, not only to technical training in the use of weapons and in military tactics, but also to political education—to study and discussion of what they are fighting for, what are the causes of the war and the principles for which they and their allies stand. While off-parade relations between officers and men are free and easy, on duty discipline is very strict; but every effort has been made so that it shall be, not a mechanical discipline like the German, but an intelligent discipline of men who understand what it is all about and where they fit in and willingly subordinate themselves to the unity of a team. Soviet fighting men, again unlike the German, do not feel themselves superior to people of other nations and have no ambition to conquer other lands. Part of their political upbringing, in fact, has consisted in a spirit of *internationalism*, in which all men, of whatever race or colour, are equal and are brothers, like the different races within the U.S.S.R. itself. At the same time they have a fervent love of their own country and are pledged to defend it against attack by others to the last drop of their blood. To-day they have a burning hatred of the German Nazis because the Nazis are swaggering bullies, who have sinned against the brotherhood of man, and in their bestial cruelties have sinned against human decency itself.



A SOVIET SUBMARINE

there is also a Pacific Fleet, centred on the port of Vladivostok. Starting in 1934 with only one submarine, this had grown by 1939 until, according to Admiral Kuznetsov, it consisted of "more than 100 fighting vessels." Each fleet also has its own Fleet Air Arm attached to it.

The training of Soviet seamen is on a very high level. Not only do special Naval Academies exist for the training of officers; but the majority of the ordinary ranks have passed through special naval schools, while their training on ship is carried on under conditions that are made as close to war-conditions as possible. In the years just before the war at least two-thirds of those entering the Navy had had a secondary education. The Oath which is taken on entering the Red Navy contains the following words: "I solemnly swear to be an honourable, brave, disciplined and watchful fighter. I swear to apply myself conscientiously to acquiring knowledge of naval affairs, to guard unsleepingly the property of the Navy and of the country, to remain devoted to my last breath to my people, to my Soviet Fatherland, and to the Workers' and Peasants'

## Chapter 14

### - THE WAR AND THE ANGLO-SOVIET - - - - ALLIANCE - - -

HITLER aimed in the summer of 1941 to crush U.S.S.R. by a swift blow, as she had done before in the case of Poland and of France. But the Red Army had found an answer to the German *blitz* strategy; and the German plan of encirclement and annihilation of the Red Army was foiled. While the Russians were forced to fall back, and suffered very severe losses both of men and territory, and although the Germans made a deep penetration into the Ukraine, crossing the Dnieper and capturing Kiev and Kharkov, the grand assaults on Leningrad and Moscow were fought to a standstill. In the first week of December Hitler suffered his first major defeat, being thrown back by well-timed counter-attacks from before Moscow and forced to retreat. Meanwhile, with great heroism ordinary people, farmers, school-teachers, Red Army soldiers cut off from their units in retreat, formed themselves into guerrilla-fighters in the areas behind the German lines, harrying the invader's rear, derailing trains, ambushing convoys on the road, and raiding depots and staff headquarters.

Clearly the Germans had never expected to spend the winter in Russia under war-conditions. They had expected that by then all would be over: at least, that they would be snugly housed in Moscow and Leningrad, and what was left of the Soviet armies would be retreating beyond the Volga and the Urals. Following its success before Moscow, the Red Army gave the Germans no rest, and ceaselessly attacked throughout the winter months. And in those winter months, with their biting winds and snow blizzards and thirty degrees of frost and the repeated blows of the Red Army in front and of guerrillas in the rear, the great German Army in the east came very near to breaking-



A SOVIET A.A. GUN.

lasted and enabled them to turn their full weight eastward for a final blow.

Again the weight of the German thrust, backed by millions of tons of metal from the steel-furnaces of all Europe, carried them forward across several hundreds of miles of territory—across the Donetz and the Don, into the rich wheatfields of the Kuban and north Caucasus, and up to the mountain passes themselves and as far as the two northern oilfields of Maikop and Grozny (though they never quite reached the latter). But farther north, in their flanking move against Moscow, they were foiled and thrown back at Voronezh. In the Crimea their time-table was badly thrown out by the heroic resistance of Sevastopol, which only fell when it had been pounded into rubble and dust by giant siege-guns. They were halted similarly at the Volga by the equally heroic defence of Stalingrad, where Red Army men fought for three months in the smouldering ruins of what had been a fine and fair city on the river's banks: Red Army men who rose from holes in the ground to hurl back the tanks that poured in wave after wave against them, while reinforcements of men and munitions trickled across and down the broad Volga in face of ceaseless bombardment from the air. The end of November found the Red Army counter-attacking both to the north and south of the city, driving the Germans back and enveloping a quarter-of-a-million of them in a steel-like grip, while the heroic defenders of what has come to be known as "The City of Steel" drove out the Germans, street by street, from the ruined suburbs in which they had gained a foothold. These counter-blows of the Red Army, more powerful than those delivered a year before and developing into a victorious counter-offensive, were specially heartening to the cause of the United Nations, since they coincided with the offensive of the British and American forces to drive the Germans and Italians from North Africa.

Foiled in 1941 and foiled again in 1942 by men who fought like giants, because they knew they were fighting for

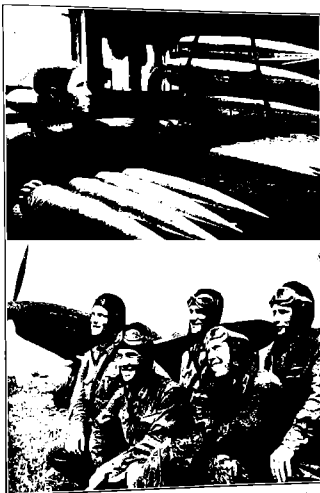


MECHANISED INFANTRY PARADING THROUGH ONE OF THE CENTRAL SQUARES OF KHARKOV.

point and to complete disaster. The Germans themselves have admitted that "a Napoleonic catastrophe was close" that winter (quoted, *The Times*, October 19th, 1942).

In the spring of 1942 the burning question was whether the Germans would launch a new offensive in the east or whether, before they could do so, Britain would open up a Second Front in Western Europe. It turned out that Germany was in sufficient difficulties after the strain of the winter campaign for the offensive to be postponed from the spring until the summer; and in the early summer the Red Army itself launched an offensive round Kharkov to disorganise the German preparations. It was clear, however, that the Germans were anxious to strike what was thought would be a crushing blow: a drive into the Caucasus to secure oil and a drive eastward across the Don to the Volga, which would turn to attack the armies defending Moscow from the flank, and by a northward thrust would encircle Moscow and divide the Red Army in two. Once again they counted on doing this while the lull in the west





Top: Making shells in a Leningrad factory. Bottom: Soviet fighter-pilots (all five of them have been decorated for bravery).

land that was theirs against barbarian enslavement, the Germans resorted to brutalities which have no parallel since the wars of the Middle Ages. Civilians in the towns and villages occupied by Hitler's troops were robbed, tortured and killed; men, women and children flogged, bayoneted or hanged. In Kharkhov alone 14,000 civilians were butchered; in Kerch 7,000 were machine-gunned on one day by order of the German Commandant; in Taganrog 3,000 were mown down by automatic-riflemen in batches of a hundred. These were not occasional atrocities of individuals, such as happen in any war, since war is always a brutalising and beastly business. They were the studied and callous cruelty of men brought up in the doctrine that they were a superior race and their enemies little better than animals. They were part of a systematic war of extermination, planned in high places by men whom the people of the world will need to look for their crimes.

The sacrifices and the sufferings of the Russian people are of a size that most of us find it hard to imagine. Already in the first twelve months of what Mr. Churchill called "the Russian glory" they showed themselves to be allies of which we could be proud indeed, and from which we could learn a number of lessons. To be true friends with another people, one must first of all have knowledge and one must understand them. From understanding comes mutual respect and the possibility of effective common action and full-hearted co-operation. This common action between the peoples of Britain and U.S.S.R., together with U.S.A. and the other United Nations, is essential to win the war and it is essential after victory is won, if peace is to be built on sound foundations, and starved and tortured Europe is to be successfully revived and restored. There has been so much misunderstanding about this great country in the past that we can none of us do too much to-day both to get and to spread the knowledge and the understanding that are so urgently needed. To understand a person you need to appreciate their differences from, as well as their likenesses to, oneself. The Russians



THE SIGNING OF THE ANGLO-SOVIET TREATY OF ALLIANCE AND MUTUAL ASSISTANCE AT THE FOREIGN OFFICE IN LONDON, MAY 26TH, 1942.

From left to right at the table: Mr. Molotov, Mr. Anthony Eden, Mr. Winston Churchill.

assistance to U.S.S.R. and mutual collaboration after the war in the spirit of the Atlantic Charter. Three months later Mr. Churchill paid a return visit to Moscow and conferred for three days with Mr. Stalin in the Kremlin over urgent questions connected with the war.

Friendship between two peoples means something more than a piece of paper signed by statesmen on a shining table in a room in Whitehall. It means friendship between the ordinary people of the two countries: friendship springing from understanding one another and from working together and suffering together. The British sailors who have battled through with their convoys taking supplies to Murmansk and Archangel are forging that bond between our two peoples. So have our airmen done who have gone there with British Hurricanes and flown alongside Soviet airmen and shared their troubles and their achievements. So, in a different way, have British trade-unionists who have

and ourselves have plenty of things in common—a sense of justice, a sense of decency and a sense of humour, comradeship and a willingness to lay down their lives in order that the world shall be a better place for others to live in. But there are also differences between us, particularly in political ideas and the social systems of the two countries, and these differences we must understand as well.

The Soviet Government had declared its support for the principles of the Atlantic Charter, drawn up by Mr. Churchill and President Roosevelt at their famous meeting on board ship in mid-Atlantic in August 1941. Among other things, this Charter had pledged Britain and U.S.A. to respect the right of any nation to choose its own form of government, and to seek a peace after the war that would enable all peoples to live in safety without fear of aggression. The following year saw a further important landmark in the development of close relations between the United Nations. On May 26th, 1942, the alliance between Britain and U.S.S.R. was extended into a Treaty of Alliance and Mutual Assistance, to last for twenty years in peace and war. This was signed by Mr. Molotov and Mr. Eden (in the presence of Mr. Churchill) during Mr. Molotov's visit to London. It provided for mutual "support of all kinds" during the war and "common action to preserve peace and resist aggression in the post-war period." "After the termination of hostilities," it said, the two countries would "take all the measures in their power to render impossible a repetition of aggression and violation of the peace by Germany or any of the States associated with her." The two countries "agree to work together in close and friendly collaboration after the re-establishment of peace for the organisation of security and economic prosperity in Europe." The official announcement added that "full understanding was reached with regard to the urgent task of creating a second front in Europe in 1942." At the same time Mr. Molotov paid an important visit to the American President, in Washington, as a result of which an agreement was signed providing for extended lease-lend

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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The map which forms the first end-paper owes its inspiration to J. H. Stembridge's *An Atlas of the U.S.S.R.*

formed their own Anglo-Soviet Trade Union Committee to enable the trade-unionists of the two countries to pull together more closely, and so have the workers in British factories who bent their backs and worked overtime in order to double the output of tanks that could be made in British factories to be sent to the British armies in Africa, or sent to help the Russians over there on the eastern front.

So in numerous little ways, and let us hope in some large ways too, you and I can help in this. We must do so, because this is a People's War we're in, fought for our very existence as free men and women. Only if the peoples of all the United Nations pull together, and pull very hard, shall we win it, and afterwards be able to build a better world for both ourselves and everyone else to live in—a world, let us hope, from which war will be banished for ever. And when those brighter and better days dawn, when Soviet boys and girls in the war-zone can laugh again and our own homes be safe from bombing, we shall not like it to be said of any of us that in the dark and difficult times we shirked our duty and failed to pull our weight.

#### SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

THE following is far from being an exhaustive list. The titles listed are chosen for their combined qualities of brevity and simplicity. For a full bibliography, Philip Grierson's *Books on Soviet Russia 1917-42* (Methuen) can be consulted.

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- Leningrad, 14, 15, 23, 24, 25, 27, 51, 56, 60, 102, 105, 119-20, 125, 129, 133
- Litvinov, M., 115, 118
- Magnitogorsk, 86, 56
- Maitsky, I., 126
- Mayakovsky, 112
- Metro, Moscow, 74
- Molotov, V., 90, 116, 135
- Mongolia, 33, 46, 54, 123
- Moscow, 13, 14, 18, 32, 39, 40, 44, 56, 66, 97, 102, 103, 129
- Moscow Art Theatre, 15, 103, 104, 105
- Moscow-Volga Canal, 63
- Moslems, 10, 87
- Mnuch, 117, 123
- Murmansk, 8, 44, 59, 125, 135
- Music, 106
- Nationalities, 9-10, 11, 82-5, 89
- Navy, 28, 125-7
- Nemirovitch-Danchenko, 105
- NEP, 34
- Neva, 9, 22, 24
- North Pole, 8, 67, 58-60
- Oil, 12, 13, 39, 43, 130-1
- Papanin, 57-8
- Pasternak, 112
- Peasants, 15-17, 26-7, 33-4, 40, 64-9
- Pioneers, Young, 101, 102
- Pirozhkov, Lieut., 124
- Planning, 71, 72-6
- Poland, 13, 32, 46, 118
- Population, 8-9, 56
- Pravda*, 28
- Prokoviev, 106
- Pushko, 109, 110
- Pudovkin, 107, 109
- Races, 9, 82-5
- Railways, 7, 13, 39, 75
- Rapallo, Treaty of, 114
- Raspoutine, 21, 22
- Red Army, 28, 32-3, 121-3, 122, 127, 128, 130, 129-31
- Religion, 86-8
- Rest-homes, 78
- Revolution (1905), 18-19; (1917), 22-4, 28-30, 113
- Sanatoria, 79
- Saving, 61, 81
- Schmidt, Prof. Otto, 58-60, 89
- Schools, 94-101, 96, 68
- Sergius, Metropolitan, 87, 88
- Sevastopol, 131
- Shakespeare, 104, 106, 111
- Sholokhov, M., 112
- Shops, 82
- Shostakovitch, D., 106
- Siberia, 11, 12, 32, 47, 56
- Slavs, 9
- Sochi, 78
- Social Insurance, 78-9
- Socialism, 26, 61, 72-3, 85-6
- "Socialist Realism," 113
- Soviets, 24, 25-30, 88-91
- Sport, 101, 102
- Stakhanov, A., 80, 109
- Stalin, J., 32, 90, 118, 119, 121, 135
- Stalingrad, 32, 41, 77, 131
- Stanislavsky, 105
- State farms, 70
- Steel, *see* Iron
- Steppes, 51-2
- Stormoviks, 124
- Taimyr, 88
- Tartars, 9, 85, 103
- Tashkent, 12, 29, 33, 54, 55, 56
- Theatres, 103-6, 104, 110
- Tian Shan Mts., 8, 46, 54
- Timoshenko, 113, 124
- Tolstoy, A., 112
- Tolstoy, L., 14, 102, 106, 111
- Tractors, 39, 42, 43, 67, 77
- Tractor stations, 69
- Trade Unions, 20, 76-80, 136
- Trans-Siberian Railway, 7
- Treaty, Anglo-Soviet, 134, 135
- Tsar, 17-19, 21, 22-4
- Turkestan, 10, 33, 54, 55, 56, 83, 84
- Turkey, 114
- Turks, 9-10
- Ukraine, 9, 12, 13, 48, 56, 68, 83, 125
- Universities, 99-100
- Ural Mts., 7, 12, 13, 48, 55, 56, 129
- Ural, R., 38
- U.S.A., 7, 8, 34, 116, 132, 134-5
- Uzbeki, 10, 12, 84
- Vladivostok, 7, 33, 60, 126
- Volga, R., 9, 10, 13, 37, 46-7, 52, 129
- Voroshilov, C., 118
- Wages, 61-2, 78, 81
- War (1914-18), 20-1; (1941-), 129-36
- Winter Palace, 23
- Yakuts, 10, 46, 85
- Yenisei, R., 8, 46, 49, 55, 60
- Zemstva, 18-19, 24

# INDEX

NOTE:—The attention of the reader is called to the fact that, in the following Index, whenever a subject is illustrated the number of the page on which the picture appears is printed in heavy type.

- Aeroplanes, 39, 56, 123-5, **133**  
 Agriculture, 15-18, 33-4, 40, 47, 64-70  
 Alliance, Anglo-Soviet, 134, **135**  
 Altai Mts., 8, 10, 46, 54, 55, 85  
 Aluminium, 12, 39, 51  
 Amur, R., 46, 55  
 Aral Sea, 54  
 Archangel, 32, 44, 125, 135  
 Arctic, 8, 46-51, 57-60  
 Armenians, 11, 12, 84  
 Army, see Red Army  
 Atlantic Charter, 134-5  
 Autonomous Regions, 10, 34  
  
 Baikal, Lake, 8, 46, 55  
 Baku, 12, 56  
 Balkash, Lake, 12  
 Baltic States, 31, 84, 115, 117, 118-19  
 Banks, 61, 81  
 Barents Sea, 51, 125  
 Behring Straits, 8, 57, 59-60  
 Black Earth, 51-2  
 Bolsheviks, 25-30, 92  
 Brest-Litovsk, Treaty of, 31  
  
 Caspian Sea, 8, 12, 13, 46-7, 52, 54  
 Caucasus Mts., 8, 9-10, 12, 54, 130-1  
 Central Asia, 9, 10, 44, 54-5, 56, 82, 84  
 Cheliabinsk, **42**  
 Chelyuskin, 59-60  
 Chkalov, 57-8  
 Church, 86-8  
 Churchill, Winston, 121, 132-5, **135**  
 Coal, 12, 13, 39, 54-5, 75  
 Collective farms, 40-1, **63, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69**  
 Commissars, Council of, 2, 61, 84  
 Communist Party, 92  
 Constitution, 85-6  
 Co-operatives, 62-4, 82  
 Cotton, 55, 75  
 Czechoslovakia, 115-17  
  
 Democracy, 18-20, 76-9, 82-93  
 Dickens, 111-12  
 Dnieper, R., 9, 12, 37, 47  
 Dnieper Dam, 12, **37**  
 Don, R., 10, 47, 80, **131**  
 Donetz R., 13, 47, 54-5, **131**  
 Dovjlenko, **107**  
 Duma, 18-19, 23-4  
  
 Education, 76, 84, 93-102  
 Ehrenburg, I., 112  
 Eisenstein, S., 107-9, **108**  
 Elections, 88-92, **91**  
 Electricity, 12-13, 36, 74  
 Electrification, **35, 36-8, 37, 74, 75**  
  
 Far Eastern Territory, 12, 14, 46, 53  
 Films, 106-11  
 Finns, 9, 10, 118-20, 123  
 Five Year Plans, 38-9, 41, 55, 65, 74-6  
 Frunze Academy, **122**  
  
 Georgia, 10, 103  
 Germans, 21, 31, 114, 115, 118, 123, 129-32  
 Gold, 12, 46  
 Gorky, Maxim, 16, 102, **110, 111**  
 Gosplan, 73  
 Gromov, M., 57-8  
 Gulliver, The New, 109, **110**  
  
 Handicrafts, **62**  
 Hitler, 115-17, 118-21  
  
 Igarka, 48-50  
 Income, 13, 35-6, 61-2  
 Indigirka, R., 8, 46  
 Industry, 13-14, 34-6, 38-9, **43, 61, 71, 75**  
 Iron and steel, 12, 13, 36, 39, 51, 54-5, 75  
  
 Japanese, 33, 115, 120, 123  
 Jews, 10, 85  
  
 Kalinin, M., **89, 90**  
 Karaganda, 55, 56  
 Karelia, 10, 51  
 Kazakhstan, 10, **11, 12, 55, 84**  
 Kazan, 9, 25, 32  
 Kerensky, A., 26, 28-39  
 Kharkov, **42, 56, 102, 129, 130, 132**  
 Kola Peninsula, 12, 44, 51  
 Korniilov, 28-9, 31, 32  
 Kulsks, 15, 17  
 Kusbas, 54-5  
  
 League of Nations, 114-16  
 Lena, R., 8, 12, 46, 55  
 Lenin, 25-30, **27, 28**











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